

A Critical Analysis of Innovation and Subsequent change of Ultimate KhoKho & Franchise Sports

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Abstract: The new upgradation of Kho-Kho games is Ultimate Kho-Kho. The Ultimate Kho-Kho league strives to elevate the age-old Indian sports to international standard and allow young talents to showcase their skills in front of Pan India. This research paper examines how the traditional Indian sport of Kho Kho has changed over time, emphasizing the crucial role that innovative formats like Ultimate Kho Kho and the emergence of franchise-based leagues have played in accelerating the sport's growth. The aim of the research is to illustrate the significant influence that these modern methods have on player skill development, game popularity, and the sports ecosystem as a whole. The research illustrates how the introduction of strategic innovations—like player substitutions and innings with time constraints—has enhanced audience engagement and excitement. The introduction of professional leagues not only provides a sustainable platform for athletes but also attracts corporate investments, fostering infrastructural development and training facilities. Franchise sports have also been essential in developing a dedicated audience that goes beyond local borders and takes Kho Kho to a national or perhaps global stage.

Key words: Evolution, Franchise, Indian sports, Kho Kho, Traditional, Ultimate

INTRODUCTION

In 2022, 14 August to 4th September, an Indian Franchise based Kho-Kho league started by Mr. Amit Burman to promote ultimate Kho-Kho, India's first ever-professional Kho-Kho league in a collaboration with the Kho-Kho Federation of India. Kho Kho is a traditional Indian sport known for its fast pace and tag-based gameplay. It is a team sport that emphasizes physical agility, strategy, and teamwork. The game is played on a rectangular field with specific dimensions, where two teams of nine players each take turns to be 'chasers' and 'defenders'. The objective for the chasers is to tag as many defenders as possible within a given time frame, while the defenders aim to avoid being tagged, utilizing speed and strategic movements. Kho Kho's origins, while not precisely documented, are often linked to the training methods of ancient Indian warriors. It was not just a game but also a way to

develop speed, agility, and stamina, essential for soldiers. The transition from a military exercise to a competitive sport is a testament to its adaptability and enduring appeal.

Evolution of the Game

The formalization of Kho Kho's rules and its transformation into a competitive sport are largely credited to efforts made in the early 20th century, especially by organizations such as the Deccan Gymkhana of Pune. This included standardizing the playing field, establishing clear rules, and organizing competitions. These efforts helped transition Kho Kho from a loosely organized village game to a structured sport with a national and increasingly international presence. Kho Kho's journey from an informal village game to a structured competitive sport is marked by several key developments. The most notable of these was the formal codification of its rules by the Deccan Gymkhana of Pune in the early 20th century, which played a crucial role in standardizing the game. This standardization included defining the dimensions of the court, the rules of play, and the scoring system. As a result, Kho Kho started to be played in schools and colleges, and its popularity grew. The establishment of the Kho Kho Federation of India in 1955 and the inclusion of Kho Kho in various national and international sporting events further boosted its stature as a competitive sport.

Introduction of Franchise Leagues

Franchise sports have significantly transformed the sports industry, introducing a model that blends athletic competition with commercial strategy to revolutionize how sports are presented, consumed, and perceived globally. This transformation is evident across multiple dimensions, including economic growth, global reach, fan engagement, and athlete development. This shift has been evident globally, with leagues like the NFL, NBA, and English Premier League setting benchmarks for success. In India, the

Indian Premier League (IPL) for cricket has been a trailblazer, demonstrating the profound impact franchise sports can have on a nation's sporting culture. The model's influence extends across various aspects of the sports industry, from the economic landscape to athlete management and fan engagement.

Franchise sports have catalyzed remarkable economic growth within the sports industry. By attracting investments from corporate sponsors, media rights sales, and merchandising, they have turned sports into multibillion-dollar enterprises. Teams and leagues now operate as major businesses, contributing significantly to local and national economies. This influx of money has also led to the development of state-of-the-art stadiums and sports facilities, enhancing the infrastructure around sports. In India, the IPL has showcased the economic potential of franchise sports, with its brand value skyrocketing since its inception in 2008. The league has attracted global investors and sponsors, boosting not just the cricket economy but also having a ripple effect on industries such as hospitality, retail, and entertainment.

The Ultimate Kho Kho

The introduction of the franchise league, particularly through the Ultimate Kho Kho (UKK) league, has significantly changed Kho Kho as a sport in several impactful ways. This modernization and commercialization effort has aimed to elevate the sport's profile, making it more appealing and accessible to a broader audience. The Ultimate Kho Kho (UKK) league was officially launched in 2021, with its inaugural season taking place in 2022. The league was launched for several reasons, aiming to revitalize and transform Kho Kho into a professional sport that could appeal to a wider audience, both nationally and potentially internationally.

Objectives of the Launch

Modernizing Kho Kho: One of the primary reasons for launching the Ultimate Kho Kho league was to modernize the traditional game, making it more relevant and appealing in today's sports landscape. This involved professionalizing the sport, introducing standardized rules, and incorporating elements that would make it more spectator-friendly. **Increasing Visibility and Popularity:** Despite being one of the oldest sports in India, Kho Kho lacked the visibility and popularity enjoyed by cricket, football, or

badminton. The UKK league aimed to elevate the sport's profile through structured competition, media coverage, and marketing, thereby attracting a new generation of fans and players.

Creating Opportunities: By professionalizing Kho Kho, the Ultimate Kho Kho league sought to create new opportunities for athletes, coaches, and others involved in the sport. This includes opportunities for athletes to pursue Kho Kho as a viable career, benefiting from better training facilities, coaching, and financial support. **Cultural Preservation and Promotion:** Launching the UKK league was also a way to preserve and promote Indian cultural heritage. Kho Kho has deep roots in Indian history, and by bringing it to a larger audience, the league contributes to keeping the traditional sport alive and relevant.

From Traditional Kho Kho to Ultimate Kho Kho

Ultimate Kho Kho (UKK) is a modern version of the traditional Indian game of Kho Kho. It introduces several changes to make the game more exciting, fast-paced, and appealing to a wider audience, including young people and sports fans around the world.

Ultimate Kho Kho has introduced technology and infrastructure improvements not seen in traditional Kho Kho. Matches are played in stadiums with better facilities, and the games use technology for things like instant replays and decision reviews, which helps make the game fairer and more transparent. These improvements not only enhance the viewing experience for fans but also provide players with a professional environment similar to other popular sports.

Unlike traditional Kho Kho, which is often played in schools, colleges, or at the community level without much commercial support, Ultimate Kho Kho is a professional league. This means players are part of teams owned by businesses or celebrities, similar to cricket's IPL teams. This professional setup includes contracts, salaries, and sponsorships, making Kho Kho a viable career option for athletes. This level of commercialization brings in more money, which can be used to improve the sport further.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Title of the Study

The study title, "Evolution of Kho Kho: A Comprehensive Analysis of Ultimate Kho Kho and

Franchise Sports' Impact on Game Development", suggests that the study aims to explore and detail how the game of Kho Kho has developed over time, with a particular focus on the significant changes brought about by the introduction of the Ultimate Kho Kho (UKK) league. This league represents a modern, franchise-based approach to organizing sports competitions, similar to other successful models in various sports disciplines worldwide.

The study aims to provide a deep dive into both the positive changes and challenges that come with modernizing traditional sports through such leagues, focusing on aspects like player development, audience engagement, infrastructure improvement, and the overall business model of sports franchising. By focusing on Ultimate Kho Kho, the study not only shines a spotlight on an innovative approach to sport revitalization in India but also offers a template that could be adapted by other traditional sports worldwide seeking to enhance their profile and commercial success through franchising.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Kho Kho's rich heritage and cultural significance in India, the sport has historically struggled with limited visibility, underdeveloped infrastructure, and scarce financial investment compared to more mainstream sports. The introduction of the Ultimate Kho Kho (UKK) league represents a pivotal shift towards professionalizing and commercializing the sport through a franchise model, akin to successful leagues in other sports. The study aims to provide a deep dive into both the positive changes and challenges that come with modernizing traditional sports through such leagues, focusing on aspects like player development, audience engagement, infrastructure improvement, and the overall business model of sports franchising. By focusing on Ultimate Kho Kho, the study not only shines a spotlight on an innovative approach to sport revitalization in India but also offers a template that could be adapted by other traditional sports worldwide seeking to enhance their profile and commercial success through franchising.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to explore and understand the dynamics introduced by the franchise model in traditional sports, with a specific lens on Ultimate Kho Kho (UKK). The study aims to achieve several key

goals:

- Assess Audience Engagement and Growth
- Explore Economic Sustainability
- Examine Infrastructure Development
- Understand Cultural and Social Impact
- Analyze the Impact on Player Development

Scope of the Study

The study aims to understand how turning traditional sports like Kho Kho into professional leagues affects various aspects of the game. This research aims to delve into several critical areas to offer a holistic understanding of the franchising model's implications for traditional sports. Initially, the study will explore the historical context and evolution of Kho Kho, charting its journey from a grassroots game with deep cultural roots to its current form. This historical overview is essential for understanding the significance of the changes brought by the UKK and setting the stage for a deeper analysis of its impact.

The implementation of the franchise model within Kho Kho, specifically through the UKK, represents a key focus area. The study will examine the structural setup of the league, including team ownership dynamics, the process of player selection, and the overall operational model. By drawing comparisons with other successful sports franchises around the globe, the research aims to identify key factors contributing to the success or challenges faced by the UKK. The economic and financial dimensions of introducing a franchise model to Kho Kho will also be scrutinized. This includes analyzing revenue streams, the financial health of teams and the league, investment trends, and the broader economic effects on the sport's ecosystem.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the influence of the Ultimate Kho Kho league and similar franchise sports models on the development of the game, including aspects such as player development, economic benefits, infrastructure improvements, and fan engagement. To achieve this, the research methodology encompasses primary data collection method; secondary research through analysis of existing literature, websites, and articles, and primary research through a survey designed to gather more information.

Secondary Research

The first component of our methodology involves an extensive review of secondary sources to collect data on the inception, evolution, and current status of the Ultimate Kho Kho league and other franchise sports models. This includes an analysis of academic journals, sports management publications, official league websites, news articles, and case studies. The goal is to gather historical data, statistics, expert analyses, and reported outcomes related to game development, economic impacts, infrastructural changes, and fan engagement strategies.

Primary Research

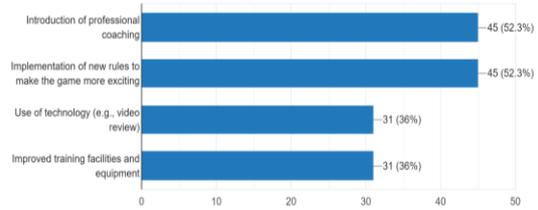
Concurrently, primary data will be collected through a survey targeting a diverse group of respondents including fans, players, coaches, sports administrators, and other stakeholders involved with or interested in Ultimate Kho Kho and franchise sports. The survey, as outlined previously, consists of multiple-choice questions designed to capture perceptions, experiences, and opinions on the impact of the Ultimate Kho Kho league on various aspects of the game's development. The survey will be distributed online through social media platforms and email to reach a wide and varied audience.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Survey Insights

In this exploration of the dynamic evolution of Kho Kho, particularly through the lens of the Ultimate Kho Kho league and the burgeoning trend of franchise sports, a comprehensive survey was conducted garnering insights from a diverse pool of 86 respondents. This inquiry was designed to understand the impacts, perceptions, and transformative effects that organized leagues and franchise models have on traditional sports. Through meticulous data analysis and interpretation of the collected responses, the aim is to unveil how such modern adaptations are influencing Kho Kho's popularity, player engagement, and spectatorship, thereby providing a multifaceted view of its evolution in the contemporary sports arena.

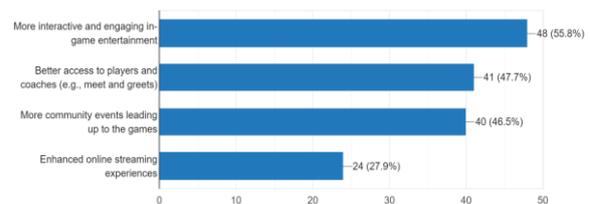
Chart 1 Showing Ways Ultimate Kho Kho has Innovated/Modernized the Game of Kho Kho



The survey on perceptions of how Ultimate Kho Kho has innovated or modernized the traditional game of Kho Kho garnered responses highlighting four main areas of innovation. Respondents were able to select multiple options, indicating that several changes might be seen as contributing to the modernization of the sport simultaneously. Both the introduction of professional coaching and the implementation of new rules are seen as the primary drivers of innovation or modernization in Kho Kho, each cited by 52.3% of respondents. This suggests a perception that coaching brings a new level of expertise and strategic development to the game, likely elevating the skill level and professionalism within the sport. Simultaneously, new rules aimed at increasing excitement point towards efforts to make the game more appealing to spectators and possibly more competitive for players.

The use of technology, such as video review, and the improvement of training facilities and equipment, both selected by 36% of respondents, indicate significant steps towards modernizing the sport. These changes suggest a move towards standardizing the game with other contemporary sports, where such technological integrations and infrastructure improvements are commonplace. These advancements likely contribute to better game integrity, fairness, and player development.

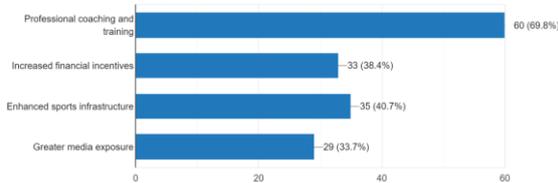
Chart 2 Showing Ways to Enhance Fan Experience in Ultimate Kho Kho League



The survey sought opinions on potential improvements for future Ultimate Kho Kho tournaments to better the fan experience, allowing respondents to choose multiple options. The survey on potential improvements to enhance fan experience in future Ultimate Kho Kho tournaments reveals a clear

preference among respondents for more interactive and engaging in-game entertainment, with 55.8% indicating this option. This suggests that fans are looking for a dynamic and immersive experience during the games, beyond just watching the matches.

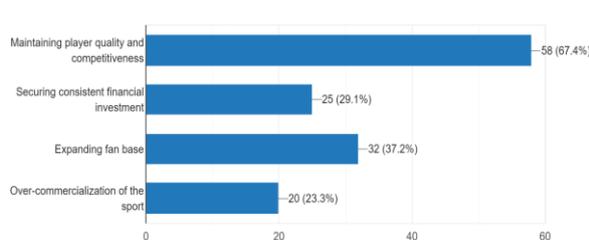
Chart 3 Showing Key Factors Contributing to Development of Players in Ultimate Kho Kho
Source - Primary Data



The question explored the key factors contributing to the development of players in Ultimate Kho Kho yielded insightful responses from 86 participants, who were allowed multiple choices. The most cited factor, with 60 respondents, was professional coaching and training. This indicates a strong belief that structured, high-quality coaching and access to training facilities are pivotal for player development in Ultimate Kho Kho. Financial incentives and enhanced sports infrastructure also emerged as significant factors, highlighted by 33 and 35 respondents, respectively.

These responses reflect the understanding that financial support motivates players and makes the sport more viable as a career option, while improved infrastructure directly impacts the quality of training and performance. Greater media exposure, identified by 29 participants, highlights the role of visibility in player development. By focusing on professional coaching and training, financial incentives, enhanced sports infrastructure, and greater media exposure, the sport can build a solid foundation for growth, professionalization, and international competitiveness.

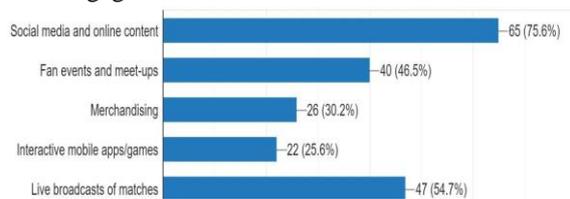
Chart 4 Showing Potential Challenges of Ultimate Kho Kho



The question aimed to identify the perceived challenges facing the future of Ultimate Kho Kho, with respondents highlighting several key areas of concern. The most frequently cited challenge, with 58

mentions, is maintaining player quality and competitiveness. This concern reflects the critical importance of ensuring that the league continues to attract, develop, and retain high-caliber athletes. Securing consistent financial investments, noted by 25 respondents, highlights the importance of sustainable economic models for the league's longevity. Expanding the fan base, as indicated by 32 respondents, is critical for the league's growth and sustainability. Concerns about over-commercialization, mentioned by 20 respondents, reflect a fear that financial or marketing considerations might overshadow the sport's traditional values or the quality of play.

Chart 5 Showing Most Effective Ways Ultimate Kho Kho Engages with its Fan



Source - Primary Data

The question sought to identify the methods by which Ultimate Kho Kho effectively engages its fan base, with responses highlighting a variety of engagement strategies. With 65 responses accounting for 75.6% of the total, social media and online content emerge as the primary means of fan engagement for Ultimate Kho Kho. This suggests that digital platforms play a crucial role in connecting with fans, providing updates, sharing engaging content, and fostering a community around the sport. Live broadcasting of matches, indicated by 47 respondents (54.7%), stands out as a significant engagement method. This highlights the importance of accessibility to live games for fans, allowing them to partake in the excitement of the sport from anywhere.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study on the evolution of Kho Kho and the impact of the franchise model on game development provide a comprehensive understanding of the sport's transformation and its broader implications. Through detailed survey responses, several key findings emerge, shedding light on various aspects of Kho Kho's evolution and the effectiveness of the franchise model in driving its growth. The overwhelming support for the franchise model, as evidenced by the survey responses, underscores its effectiveness in enhancing the sport's visibility,

professionalism, and accessibility. A staggering 90.7% of respondents believe that the league has positively impacted the standard of Kho Kho, showcasing a significant shift towards a more structured and competitive format that has elevated the game's appeal both domestically and internationally.

One of the pivotal aspects of the Ultimate Kho Kho league's success, as identified by the study, is its emphasis on grassroots development and talent nurturing. The league's approach to professional coaching, increased financial incentives, and improved sports infrastructure has been instrumental in attracting and developing talent at the grassroots level. This holistic focus on player development is further supported by 63 respondents who deem the league very effective in promoting talent development, highlighting the league's role in not just showcasing but actively contributing to the growth of players and the sport. However, the franchise model's impact extends beyond the players and the game itself, touching upon the economic and social fabric of the local communities. A notable 86% of participants acknowledge the league's contribution to local economic benefits, suggesting a ripple effect that boosts local economies through increased tourism, employment, and business opportunities related to the sport. This economic upliftment, coupled with the sport's increased visibility and popularity, exemplifies the broader societal impact of professionalizing traditional sports.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive impact, the study also sheds light on potential challenges and areas for improvement. Concerns about maintaining player quality, securing consistent financial investments, and expanding the fan base are noted as critical areas that need addressing to ensure the league's sustainable growth. Additionally, the balance between modernizing the sport and preserving its traditional essence emerges as a delicate endeavor, with a significant portion of respondents wary of over-commercialization detracting from the game's cultural significance.

The study's findings suggest that the Ultimate Kho Kho league can play an important role in reviving and modifying the Kho Kho landscape. By creating a professional environment that highlights player development, fan engagement, and economic rewards, the league established a new standard for the traditional sport. The emphasis on innovation, combined with a dedication to grassroots development

and community involvement, establishes Ultimate Kho Kho as a driving force behind the sport's growing popularity and international recognition. However, handling the problems of expansion and commercialization while preserving the sport's legacy will be critical to Kho Kho's continuing evolution under the franchise model.

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive analysis undertaken in this research paper, centered on the "Evolution of Kho Kho: A Comprehensive Analysis of Ultimate Kho Kho and Franchise Sports' Impact on Game Development," illuminates the transformative role of the franchise model in revitalizing traditional sports. Through a detailed survey encompassing diverse stakeholders, the study highlights significant shifts in audience engagement, economic sustainability, infrastructure development, cultural integration, and player development directly attributable to the inception of Ultimate Kho Kho. The findings underscore the franchise model's efficacy in amplifying Kho Kho's visibility and popularity, not just within India but on a global scale. Enhanced by strategic marketing, innovative engagement strategies, and a keen focus on digital platforms, Ultimate Kho Kho has successfully broadened its fan base, marrying traditional appeal with contemporary sports entertainment values. This model has also proven instrumental in creating a sustainable economic ecosystem around the sport, through diversified revenue streams, community involvement, and public-private partnerships, ensuring the sport's viability and growth.

Infrastructure and player development have witnessed remarkable strides, attributed to focused investments in training facilities, technology integration, and professional coaching. These enhancements not only elevate the standard of play but also ensure that Kho Kho remains competitive and appealing in the rapidly evolving sports landscape. However, the journey is far from complete. The research outlines critical pathways for future development, emphasizing the need for continuous innovation, infrastructure enhancement, and a concerted effort to balance commercial interests with the sport's traditional essence.

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