

## **Brand Management and Marketing Strategies of Royal Challengers Bangalore**

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### **Abstract**

The paper aims at establishing the brand management and marketing strategies of the Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB).

Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB), a franchise that has also become one of the favorite teams in IPL for fans, has developed a solid brand image while being an inseparable loser in the fight for the IPL title. The study thus analyses brand management and marketing trends which are perceived to have led to the success of RCB. The study will focus on how the team has taken advantage of the famous players such as Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers, how it has turned star appeal into a world brand. However, on the field RCB has failed to be a consistent performer but has loyal fans mostly because of its creative digital marketing and communicating through the social media such as Instagram, Twitter, & YouTube.

The study's main subjects are identifying the brand positioning of RCB, sponsorship partnerships, merchandise, and fan incentive measures. Through analyzing what kinds of strategic decisions are made in selecting the jersey sponsors and lifestyle brands, this paper reveals how RCB has built a comprehensive brand image. Furthermore the paper also evaluates the digital media transformation about the RCB franchise in the contemporary marketing perspective initiated through the RCB mobile application and innovative digital content about the franchise used to enrich the fan experience.

This study also analyses how RCB manages to face organizational hurdles that come with being a celebrity franchise that, to this date, has no title despite fan support. It will be done to explain such aspects of management as crisis management and brand resilience in order to sustain the image. In conclusion, this paper strives to shed lights on the state of affairs where managing a sports franchise brand in contemporary societies proving to be very challenging as shown by a critical evaluation of RCB marketing and the contributions that marketing made for the sustainability of the franchise cultural and economic capital.

### **Introduction**

RCB is a popular team in the IPL having a large fan base because of the famous celebrities joining the team. Met as recently as 2008, RCB has always been counted as one of the most precious assets in the IPL, even though the team has never triumphed at the tournament. The brand has been able to create a niche for itself due to its relation with legendary cricketers, innovative fan interactions and new age marketing.

Therefore the research proposition of this paper is to examine the marketing and brand management, strategies that have led to the success of RCB off the field. The paper will also evaluate how RCB manages to deal with conflicts of interest when it comes to sporting performance as well as fans' expectations together with a pleasant brand image. Secondary data will be collected from newspaper articles, balance sheets, Orison ratings, marketing reviews of popular industry institutions.

This study demystifies RCB's marketing strategies, and thus, reveals how franchises in sports can establish factories that are resilient enough to compete in hostile terrains such as the IPL. This will be illustrated several a times in the paper as we highlight the significance of sponsorships, digital marketing and overall strategic partnerships in enhancing the brand equity of RCB.

### **Brand Positioning and Identity**

There are several key elements that one has to consider when working on brand positioning and identity.

Brand associating with iconic players is one of the primary pillars that RCB has adopted when it comes to branding. Building the brand image of the team for more than a decade, Virat Kohli, the leader, and main face of Royal Challengers Bangalore. As mentioned, with Kohli having millions of followers on social media across the country and internationally, RCB branding has associated its image with passion, intensity, and commitment. However, since Kohli quit captaincy in 2021, his presence within this team still sustains this particular brand image.

As noted earlier, RCB in marketing itself in the IPL market has primarily place itself as an up market team with an "against the odds" story. However, it could not win any IPL title for itself, but very tactfully, it has turned this into an invincible team's branding message by capitalizing from the dreams that the fans have invested in the team every year. "Never Give Up" and "Play Bold" has been running through all over place while branding RCB.

The name RCB has been derived from its home city which is Bangalore but now officially known as Bengaluru. They play for the city but are symbolic of the whole of state of Karnataka and include local flavour into their promotional tend, merchandise, and the fan engagement. Through attracting talents from its territory, the team benefits from regional devotion; at the same time, the team would gain a much larger audience from around the world.

### **Digital Marketing and Fan Engagement**

Fan engagement in RCB heavily relies on Digital Marketing hence it is an important aspect to consider. The team has always engaged in the correct use of the social media accounts for direct interaction with the fans during off seasons. As per the insights taken from the 2022 reports, RCB remains one of the most followed IPL teams on social media platforms like Instagram where it enjoys more than 10 million followers. On Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube RCB shares daily videos and photos, player interviews, match replays, and fun contests.

One area of the digital marketing that is noticeable at RCB is the use of hashtags such as #PlayBold which has now almost become synonymous to the team. Moreover, RCB developed an application that provides the fans with a chance to engage with content, play with and for the team and purchase matchday experiences all while advancing technology across team platforms. It has also embraced AR (Augmented Reality) & VR (Virtual Reality) to help fans from the other parts of the world to support the team interactively.

YouTube marketing has become established as a strong direction for RCB's content marketing strategy. That is why programs such as "RCB Insider" are humorous and entertaining so all fans see the players' characteristics to relate to them. Such attempts have helped in establishing a cult like following, which help support the brand despite the lack of trophies for the team. RCB has also embarked on partnerships with social media personalities and brand endorser to expand its online presence and appeal, to young, informed and computer literate population in the common wealth.

### **Sponsorship and Merchandising Strategies**

The major revenue source has been sponsorship for RCB that ties up with leading brands cutting across sectors. This year the team was very fortunate to sign a kit deal with Puma, a sportswear manufacture company to supply jerseys and other accessories. This partnership has made RCB create a whole line of the RCB branded products – jerseys, caps, and

various fan accessories. These products are sold on the cyberspace and real space, with the referring to the enthusiast and fanatic fan base of the teams.

Other major associations are with Exide Industries with which RCB jerseys bear its logo. Brand associations with alcoholic lager producers like Kingfisher and telecommunication brands such as Jio have also been a major part of this squad's business model. The sponsors place themselves on RCB's jerseys, merchandise and digital media, ensuring that they receive great visibility when the IPL games are being relayed to millions of viewers worldwide.

So, merchandising is a much broader strategy for RCB than just selling jerseys. The team has created a lifestyle with apparels and accessories that suit the regular fans and the extreme team supporters. They sell their products online through their stores for clients to order directly and other retail stores where customers can access them physically;

Everything in these sponsorship and merchandising techniques have considered of immense importance to make RCB financially healthy. The RCB may not have the best of records as a cricket team on the field but off the field the team is one of the most lucrative and sought after teams by sponsors in the IPL. The same has also remained relevant due to the team's skills in marketing itself as an aspiration brand for most sponsors.

### Financial Performance and Revenue Generation

Thus, the Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) has been one of the most financially profitable franchises of the IPL even while the franchise has not tasted a victory so far. Financial analysis of the IPL teams proved that in the current financial year RCB holds one of the best franchise values primarily due to the brand image and terrific commercial revenues. Arising from the foregoing discussions, franchise revenue mobilization is basically drawn from sponsorship income, gate receipts, merchandise sales and media rights.

Around 40 per cent of RCB's income comes through central revenue sharing pool which would encompass the media rights Bagga acquired on behalf of IPL. The BCCI sold its media rights to Star Sports and Viacom18 in September 2022, in the largest-ever IPL media rights deal set at ₹48,390 crore or \$6.1 billion for the 2023–2027 cycle, which gave all franchises an assured part of the television rights through the cycle including RCB. Sponsorships, as highlighted above, are another rich revenue stream, so far emphasised by companies such as Puma, Exide Industries, and Jio.

Besides, these revenues, RCB has a revenue through ticket sales during home games held in M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru. While the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on revenues generated in-stadium in years 2020 and 2021, the team's normal activity shows ticketing revenues recovering in 2022 and 2023. To increase merchandise sales, it has partnered with more e-commerce companies which has boosted on sales on the product.

All in all, the RCB continues to report healthy financials owing to its concentration in the organisation's growth strategy as well as finding new fans across the globe and monetising digital and commercial opportunities. Even in the absence of an IPL championship trophy, how RCB has been able to successfully monetize its brand given the increasing franchise valuations proves a good the argument on effective brand management in a highly competitive sporting system.

### Brand Challenges and Resilience

In fact, RCB has many advantages – it has managed to create a powerful brand image and generate a vast amount of income, however, there are some problems in the organization. The first of these is the underachievement of the team goals in terms of on field performance. RCB has some of the largest stars and brand endorsements especially in cricketing but the team has failed to produce an IPL trophy winning which brings question marks on how much a lower performance affects the brand loyalty and sustainability.

This trend in the number of trophies has the possibility to influence the perception of the brand considering that a number of the fans identify success with sporting accomplishment. But there are number of areas where RCB has been

successful in manage the impact of failures on field by adopting proper brand management and crisis communication. The team always sends messages of endurance, force and the joy of being a “dark horse,” which every fan still proudly supports the franchise with energy.

RCB has also other issues concerning player management and retention. Top transfers and changes in captaincy have negatively impacted on cohesion hence performance. One of the major issues which lie ahead for owners of the franchisee is how to balance the stalwarts with young talents; a crucial concern owing to the cut-throat factor that the IPL auction entails.

Secondly, there are breaks in between events, RCB must discuss how it intends to fan the smoldering embers and get its fans ready for the next season if the team has been performing dismally during the tournament. To this end, RCB has ploughed significant resources into its website and social media, making sure that its brands are consistently seen outside the tournament calendar. This makes the fans stay loyal to the team, while this strategy assists try to work continuously for the success regardless the team’s performances.

## **Conclusion**

RCB is exceptional as in spite of the team’s lacklustre cricket performance, it has achieved incredible branding strategies. Having built a successful brand image of the team, investing in digital advertising and aggressively pursuing big brand sponsorships, RCB has remained one of the most valuable teams in IPL. The team’s affiliation with cricketing star like Virat Kohli and the systematic way the team has fostered its followership worldwide has placed a strong adherence on the Indian fan base.

RCB’s financial success, which was the result of media rights, sponsors, and merchandise, show the need for brand creation in sports’ franchises.. Both aspects of underperformance and frequent players’ turnover, on the one hand, and, on the other – RCB’s responses and key slogan, as well as proper management of potential crises.

Therefore, RCB’s experience is a perfect example of how marketing and branding activities preset a roadmap of branding for the sports teams irrespective of the field outcomes. The management team has effectively leveraged the brand, created innovative methods of fan interaction through digital initiatives and recently secured high-profile sponsorship that has solidified the team’s presence and profitability in the cut throat just launched IPL. As the Royal Challenging Blue goes forward in the future it will be for the group to take on the field success that has been demonstrated off the field and this will put RCB in the right frame to become one of the best franchises of Indian and world cricket.