"A Study On IPL Advertising And Ad Campaign Effectiveness: Brand Lifting Insights At Kantar"

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Abstract

This study explores how effective advertising really is during the Indian Premier League (IPL), with a particular focus on the measurement approaches used by Kantar, One of the most trusted names in marketing analytics. Over the years, IPL has grown far beyond a sporting event and has become a cultural and advertising hotspot, reaching audiences across multiple languages, regions, and devices. During my internship, I worked closely with Kantar's Brand Lifting Insights (BLI) framework to understand how ad campaigns are evaluated in terms of awareness, recall, and consumer perception. To support this, I also gathered primary responses from 81 IPL viewers to understand how they experience ads during the tournament. Their behavior was compared with insights from Kantar's Indian and global reports. The analysis highlighted that creative storytelling, emotional appeal, and celebrity endorsements play a major role in how viewers connect with IPL advertisements, while OTT platforms continue to deliver stronger engagement than traditional TV. At the same time, viewers also expressed fatigue when ads were repeated too many times.

Overall, the study suggests that IPL offers brands a powerful opportunity to stand out but only when the campaigns are creatively strong and guided by data-driven insights. Approaches like Kantar's BLI help advertisers understand what truly resonates with viewers, enabling them to build campaigns that are relevant, memorable, and strategically effective.

Introduction

The advertising industry in India has changed rapidly over the past few years, especially with the rise of digital platforms, connected TV, and short-form content. Among all major advertising environments, the Indian Premier League (IPL) continues to stand out as one of the most influential and widely consumed events in the country. The league attracts viewers from different regions, age groups, languages, and digital habits, making it a prime opportunity for brands to connect with a massive and emotionally invested audience.

Because IPL is watched across TV, OTT apps, and mobile devices, advertisers are constantly trying to understand whether their campaigns are actually working. With so many platforms and so much viewer fragmentation, it has become essential for brands to move beyond basic metrics like reach or impressions and

instead focus on whether their ads are truly shifting consumer perceptions. This is where Kantar's expertise plays an important role.

During my internship with Kantar's Media & Digital team, I was able to observe how the company uses data-driven tools especially Brand Lifting Insights (BLI), to evaluate the real impact of advertising. BLI helps identify whether viewers remember an ad, whether the creative resonates with them, and whether it influences their attitudes or purchase decisions. Through these insights, brands can understand what worked well and what needs improvement in their IPL campaigns.

This research paper aims to bring together my practical exposure at Kantar, insights from industry reports, and the responses gathered from 81 IPL viewers. The goal is to understand how IPL advertising performs in the real world, what factors make ads more memorable, and how brands can use evidence-based strategies to create more effective campaigns in the future.

Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to explore how advertising works during the Indian Premier League (IPL) and how Kantar evaluates the success of such campaigns using structured, data-driven approaches. Since IPL attracts massive and diverse viewership, it becomes essential for brands to understand what actually influences consumer perception. Keeping this in mind, the objectives of the study have been expanded as follows:

- **To understand Kantar's BLI framework**, including how exposed and control groups are compared, how questionnaires are structured, and how metrics such as awareness, recall, consideration, and purchase intent are measured.

- **To examine the role of creative elements in IPL advertising**, including storytelling, visuals, humor, celebrity presence, emotional appeal, and brand cues, and how these influence audience response.

- **To study the impact of different media platforms**-TV, OTT, mobile, and social media-on reach, recall, engagement, and persuasion among IPL viewers.

- **To analyze primary data from 81 respondents** to understand real viewer behaviour, including viewing habits, ad perception, recall, and purchase influence.

- **To evaluate major challenges in IPL advertising**, such as ad clutter, viewer fatigue, high competition, and the difficulty of maintaining attention during frequent ad breaks.

- **To provide recommendations for improving IPL advertising**, based on research findings, industry understanding, and practical exposure during the internship.

- **To highlight the growing importance of data-driven advertising**, especially the role of tools like BLI, creative diagnostics, and attention measurement in guiding smarter advertising decisions.

Literature Review

Gupta & Gandhi (2020)- Impact of Elements of Ads on Sports Fan Attitude During a Live Sporting Event

- Explored how sports viewers respond to advertisements during live matches.
- Found that humor, emotional cues, and relatable storytelling significantly influence fan attitudes.
- Concluded that ads aligned with the intensity of sports events generate stronger engagement.
- Highly relevant because IPL is a live sporting environment where ad elements matter greatly.

Sharma & Verma (2021)- Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement in Sports Advertising

- Conducted survey-based statistical analysis on the role of celebrities in sports ads.
- Established that celebrity endorsements especially athletes, meaningfully improve ad recall and trust.
- Viewers perceive endorsed brands as more credible and are more likely to remember them.
- Relevant because IPL ads heavily rely on cricketers and celebrities.

Mehta & Sinha (2020)- Digital Ad Engagement During IPL: A Case Study of Dream11

- Examined Dream11's IPL campaigns using digital tracking and CTR metrics.
- Found that short, humorous, meme-based creatives performed best on digital and mobile platforms.
- Highlighted that platform-optimized content is essential for high engagement during IPL.
- Relevant because IPL has shifted strongly toward OTT and mobile-first consumption.

Roy & Banerjee (2020)- Effectiveness of Regional Language Advertising During IPL

- Analyzed how language choice impacts ad persuasion during IPL.
- Found that regional-language creatives significantly outperform English-language ads.
- Suggested that localization improves emotional connection and message comprehension.
- Very relevant for IPL's diverse, multi-lingual Indian audience.

Das & Khan (2021)- Recall Patterns of IPL Commercial Breaks

- Studied how the timing of ads affects recall during IPL broadcasts.
- Found that mid-match advertisements produce much higher recall compared to pre-match or post-match ads.
- Explained that viewers are more alert and emotionally engaged during gameplay.
- Relevant because ad timing is a major factor for IPL advertisers.

Research Methodology

This study uses a mixed-method, descriptive research design to understand how IPL advertising influences viewers and how Kantar evaluates campaign performance through its Brand Lifting Insights (BLI) framework.

Primary Data- Primary data was collected from 81 IPL viewers through a structured verbal questionnaire. The survey covered:

- Viewing habits and preferred platforms
- Ad exposure and recall
- Influence of celebrities, humor, and emotional appeal
- Purchase intent after watching IPL ads

Respondents were selected through convenience sampling, as they represented regular IPL audiences across different ages and backgrounds.

Secondary Data- Secondary information was gathered from:

- Kantar's Media Trends & Predictions (2025)
- Academic studies related to sports advertising
- Online journals, industry reports, and existing IPL analyses
  This helped strengthen the theoretical foundation and validate the primary insights.

Data Analysis Approach- Quantitative responses were analyzed using simple percentages and frequency counts, while qualitative feedback was studied thematically. The goal was to identify broad patterns in behavior and compare them with Kantar's measurement frameworks.

Limitations

- Limited sample size of 81 viewers
- Self-reported responses may include bias
- Confidential Kantar data could not be used directly
  Even with these limitations, the methodology provides a clear understanding of how IPL advertising performs among real viewers.

Data Analysis

The analysis of primary data reveals several key patterns in IPL advertising consumption and perception:

- 90% of respondents regularly watch IPL, reflecting its dominance in Indian entertainment.
- OTT platforms such as JioCinema and Disney+ Hotstar accounted for 65% of viewership, surpassing TV's 25% share.
- 72% observed advertisements 'very frequently,' demonstrating high ad saturation during matches.
- Celebrity-endorsed and humor-based ads were most remembered, with 45% and 30% recognition respectively.
- 58% said IPL ads influence their purchase intent, while 38% reported buying a product after viewing an IPL ad.

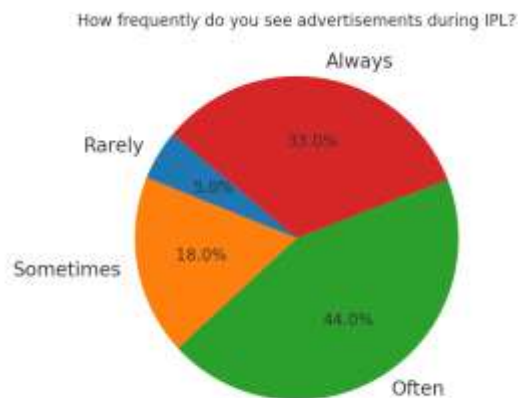Following is the questionnaire asked, along with responses.

1. Do you watch IPL matches?
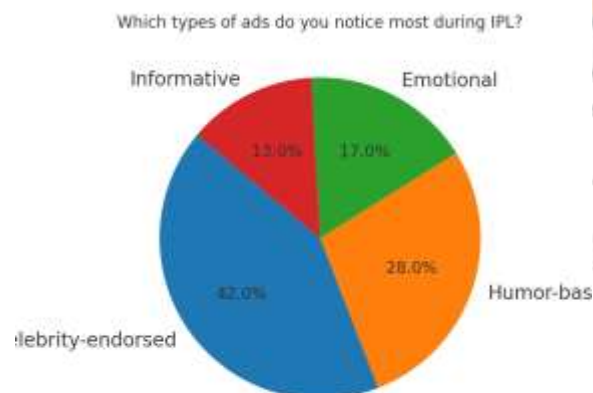

Do you watch IPL matches?
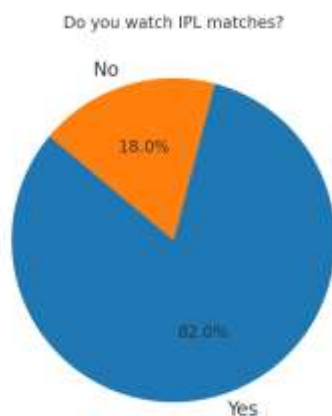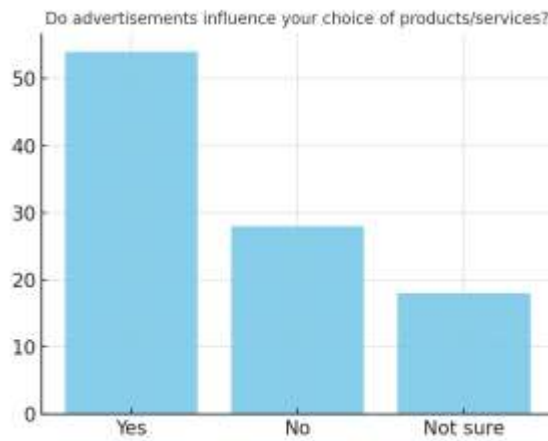
2. How do you watch IPL matches?
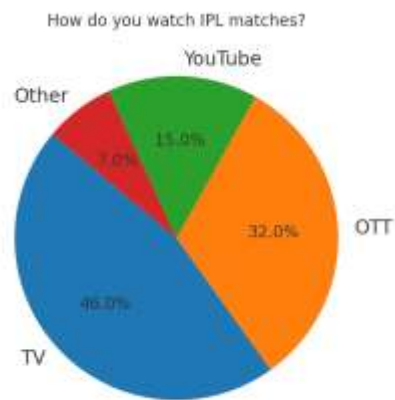
3. How frequently do you see advertisements during IPL?

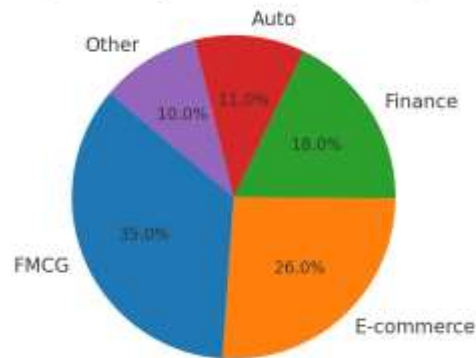4. Which types of ads do you notice most during IPL?

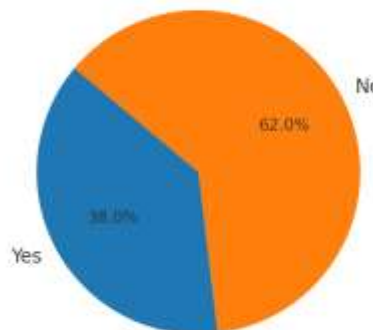5. Do advertisements influence your choice of products/services?

6. Which product categories are most advertised during IPL?

7. Have you ever purchased a product because you saw its ad during IPL?
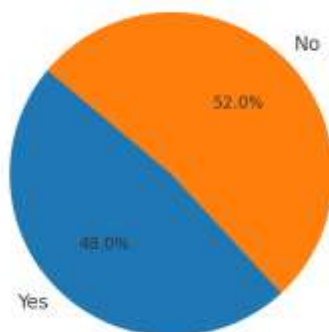
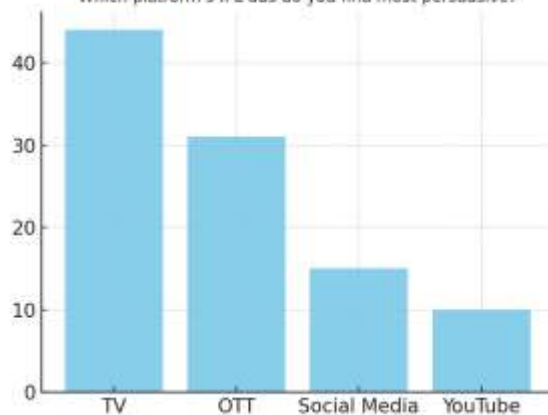8. On a scale of 1 to 5, how effective are IPL ads in grabbing your attention?
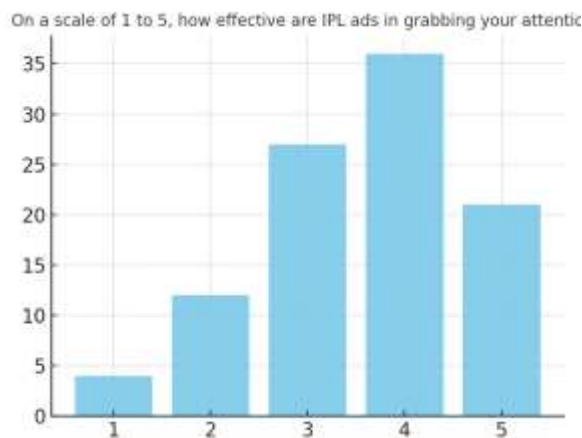
9. Do celebrity endorsements in IPL ads influence your opinion about the product?
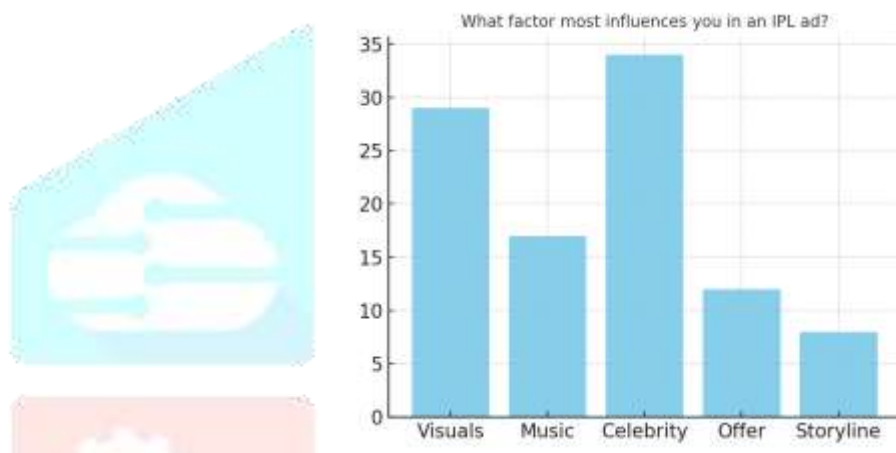

10. Which platform's IPL ads do you find most persuasive?

11. How long do you remember a brand featured in an IPL ad?
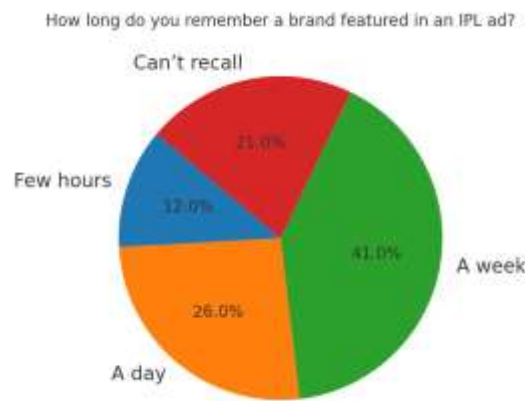
12. What factor most influences you in an IPL ad?

These findings underscore that IPL's mass reach generates visibility, but sustained engagement requires emotional relevance and message clarity. Viewers displayed strong preference for short-form, humorous, and relatable ads, often recalling campaigns from brands like Dream11, Swiggy, and CRED. However, 48% indicated that brand recall fades within days, emphasizing the importance of continuity and consistent brand storytelling.

Findings

The results of the study support Kantar's belief that advertising works best when it goes beyond simple exposure and creates a meaningful connection with the viewer. Although IPL delivers massive reach, the impact of an advertisement depends heavily on the quality of the creative, how often it appears, and how relevant it feels to the audience. Viewers showed a clear preference for ads that were well-crafted, relatable, and timed effectively.

OTT platforms were found to be particularly influential. Compared to traditional TV, OTT viewers tend to be more attentive and less distracted, which gives brands a better chance at landing their message. Kantar's BLI insights also show that ads featuring cultural references, regional languages, or locally familiar themes perform noticeably better in both awareness and favorability.

Celebrity endorsements generated mixed reactions. While a majority of respondents (55%) said they were convincing, a smaller group (15%) felt that celebrities were overused and did not always add value. This suggests that endorsements work best when they are relevant to the brand and not included just for visibility.

Ad repetition also emerged as a challenge. Many viewers reported losing interest when the same commercial aired too frequently. Consistent with Kantar's recommendations, the findings highlight the need for brands to monitor ad fatigue during the campaign and adjust creative versions or frequency in real time.

Overall, the strongest drivers of brand lift were emotional storytelling, humor, and ads that fit the mood of the ongoing match. Campaigns that connected with the excitement of the game, used cultural cues, or entertained the audience were remembered more clearly and viewed more positively.

Conclusion

This study reinforces that while IPL gives brands massive exposure, true advertising impact comes from creativity, relevance, and strategic planning rather than visibility alone. The findings show that viewers respond best to ads that feel entertaining, culturally relatable, and well-timed within the match. Kantar's BLI framework helped highlight how different creative elements such as humor, emotional appeal, and regional language directly influence awareness and brand favorability.

OTT platforms stood out as the most effective medium for IPL advertising, largely because viewers are more focused and less likely to skip or ignore ads. At the same time, challenges such as ad fatigue and overuse of celebrity endorsements suggest that brands must be careful about repetition and should consider refreshing their creatives throughout the tournament. Data-driven insights, especially mid-campaign diagnostics, can help advertisers adjust messaging or frequency before performance declines.

Overall, the results show that IPL remains one of the most powerful advertising environments in India. Brands that combine strong storytelling with careful media planning and consistent measurement are more likely to create memorable campaigns that go beyond visibility and genuinely influence consumer attitudes. As the advertising landscape continues to change, integrating creative ideas with evidence-based insights will be essential for long-term success.
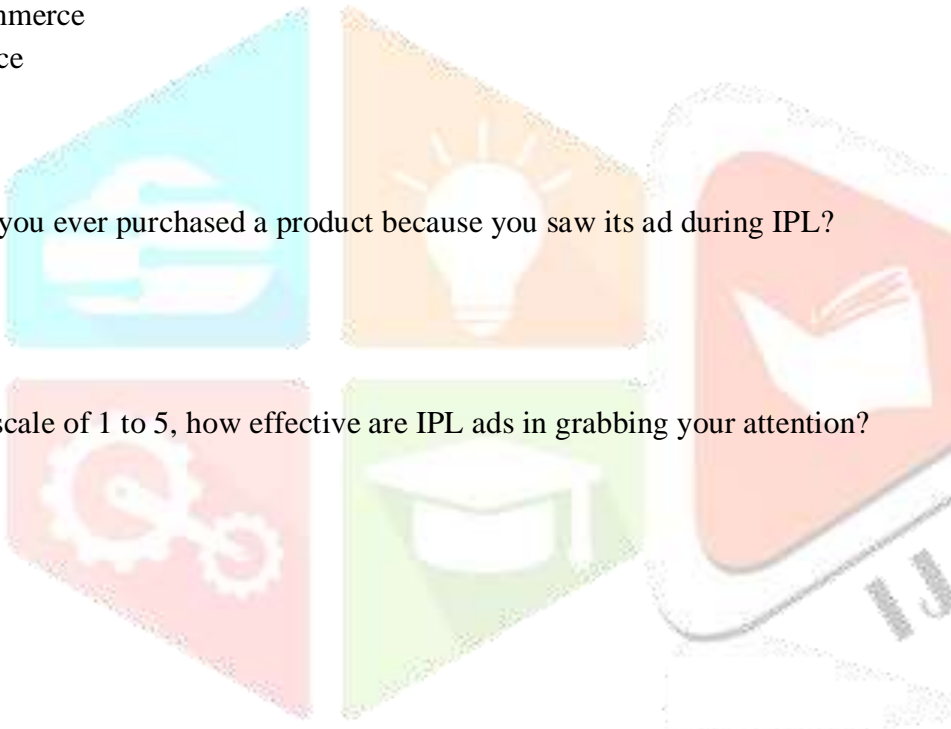
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Appendix

Questionnaire from Primary data

1. Do you watch IPL matches?

a) Yes
b) No

2. How do you watch IPL matches?

a) TV
b) OTT
c) YouTube
d) Other

3. How frequently do you see advertisements during IPL?

a) Rarely
b) Sometimes
c) Often
d) Always

4. Which types of ads do you notice most during IPL?

a) Celebrity-endorsed
b) Humor-based
c) Emotional
d) Informative

5. Do advertisements influence your choice of products/services?

a) Yes
b) No

6. Which product categories are most advertised during IPL?

a) FMCG
b) E-commerce
c) Finance
d) Auto
e) Other

7. Have you ever purchased a product because you saw its ad during IPL?

a) Yes
b) No

8. On a scale of 1 to 5, how effective are IPL ads in grabbing your attention?

a) 1
b) 2
c) 3
d) 4
e) 5

9. Do celebrity endorsements in IPL ads influence your opinion about the product?

a) Yes
b) No

10. Which platform's IPL ads do you find most persuasive?

a) TV
b) OTT
c) Social Media
d) YouTube

11. How long do you remember a brand featured in an IPL ad?

a) Few hours
b) A day
c) A week
d) Can't recall

12. What factor most influences you in an IPL ad?

a) Visuals
b) Music
c) Celebrity
d) Offer
e) Storyline