

Unlocking the Global Market: Strategies for Tapping the Export Potential of Indian Sports Goods Industry

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Abstract: As a consequence of changing buyer tastes and increasing levels of sports participation, worldwide demand for sports equipment is growing. India's sports goods industry continues to have difficulty completely leveraging its international trade possibilities. The goal of this research is to discover ways to boost the competitiveness of India in the global sporting goods market. The intent of this research is to acquire knowledge of the financial, regulatory, and market factors operating the Indian sporting goods sector through studying the sector's current circumstances, strengths, and global position. Use of bundled goods, removing regulatory ineffectiveness, promoting sports tourism, obtaining geographical indications for Kashmir willow bats, and eliminating barriers in global bidding for broad sporting events are some of the problems that emerge throughout the study. Several approaches have been suggested for improving the competitiveness of India in the worldwide sports equipment market. These include investigating bundles as an avenue for market penetration, updating regulations, improving tourism for sports, relying on geographical signs, and alleviating participation in international athletic competitions. The research indicates that India's sporting goods business has untapped potential for export and provides strategies for resolving industry obstacles, increasing growth, and upgrading the country's competitiveness around the world.

Keywords: Sports goods, Export potential, Indian industry, Global market, Market strategies, Economic trends, Regulatory factors, Market competitiveness, Bundled products, Geographical Indications, Sports tourism.

1. Introduction

Rising financial resources, changing lifestyles, a greater focus on fitness and wellness, and sports interested people especially in developing economies have all contributed to the worldwide sporting products industry's explosive growth. "The Global Wellness Institute" predicts that annual spending by consumers on recreational and athletic endeavours exceeds US\$ 90, which suggests an important market for sports things. On the back of increasing demand, the revenue of the global sports goods industry achieved a "compound annual growth rate (CAGR)" of approximately "5.2% from 2012 to 2019", resulting in an expected "US\$ 126.2 billion in 2019" (Gereffi, 2019). The sector is competitive due to the presence of large, widely recognized international companies, and most of the manufacturing is done in the Asia-Pacific region. However, the countries of China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Cambodia are the primary factories for most of the multinational companies in the sporting goods industry, which makes Asia-Pacific the most significant sports goods production area in the entire globe.

The global sporting-goods market is expected to grow to €395 billion by 2025.

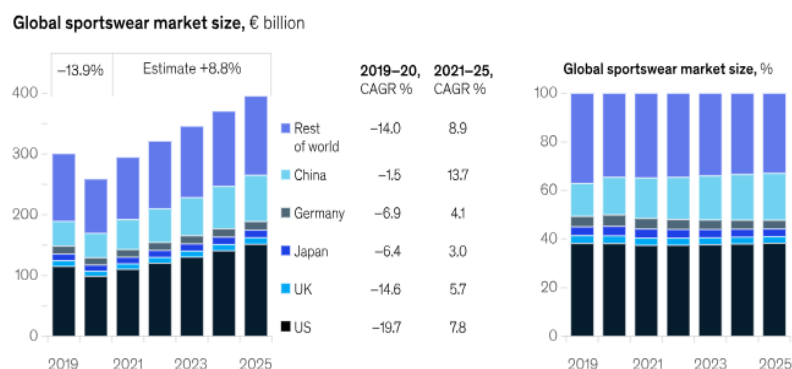


Figure 1: Global sports good market

(Source: Gereffi, 2019)

“From 2010 to 2019”, the global trade in sports equipment grew at an annualized rate “of 2%, hitting \$53.3 billion by 2019”. Among the eleven main categories of athletic items shipped around the globe in 2019, athletics and gymnasium equipment amounted to approximately 30.6%. Moreover, with an overall share of 42.2% in the worldwide exports of sporting goods in 2019, China is decisively the sector’s leader, followed by the USA, Germany, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Netherlands. After China and Japan, India has become one of the biggest producers in Asia, manufacturing more than 300 distinct kinds of sporting goods.

The production and distribution of sporting goods in India have been on an upward trajectory, with a “CAGR of 4.5%” from “2014-15 to 2018-19”. In 2018–2019, sports apparel manufacturing was estimated at around Rs. 2,380.7 crore (Khanday, 2020). It is important to highlight that over two-thirds of the nation’s overall sports goods are manufactured in only two groups, notably Jalandhar and Meerut. The production of sports equipment in India depends heavily on inexpensive labour and the export marketplace. In 2019–2020, this sector accounted for hardly 0.09% of India’s exports of goods, considering the fact that it shipped approximately 60% of its entire output. In 2019, India became the globe’s 24th greatest exporter of sporting goods, bringing up 0.56% of its overall exports.

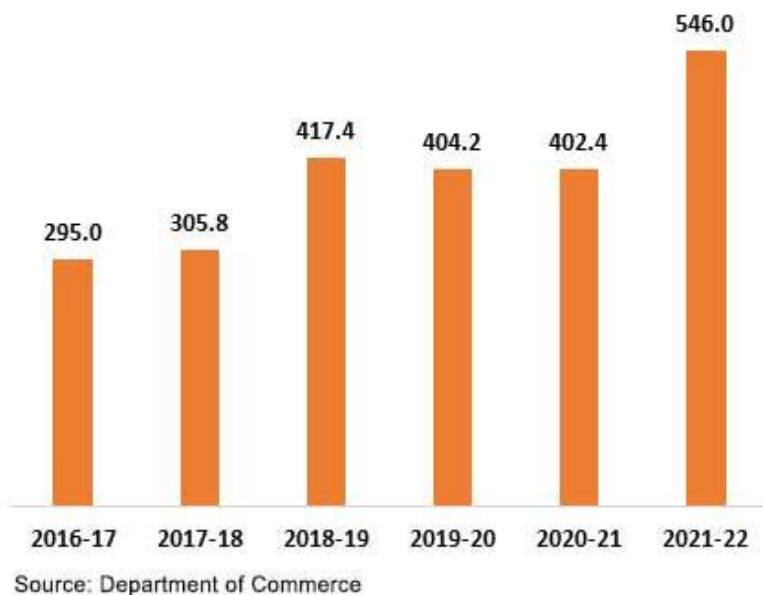


Figure 2: Sporting goods export in India

(Source: Khanday, 2020)

In 2019-2020, India exported sports and gymnasium equipment at an average rate of 37.7%, followed by festive items at 29.3%, inflatable balls, tennis balls, other balls such as table tennis balls and golf balls at 13.4%, and machinery for use at casinos, bowling centres, funfairs, circuses, and fairground entertainment at 11.2% (Kukreja

& Puri, 2022). In 2019–2020, sports imports into India constituted 0.06% of all goods brought into India. India's purchase of all types of sporting goods rose significantly “between 2010–11 and 2019-20”. According to an examination of the history of India's imports, performed in “both 2010-11 and 2019-20”, over half of the country's imports related to sporting items originated in China.

Aim and Objectives

The main aim of the research is exploring and strategizing the increase of export potential of India in the industry of sports goods.

The objectives of the present study are:

- To access the current state of the sports goods market in India along with its trends, strength, weakness and its current position in the global marketplace.
- To investigate the economic, regulatory and market factors that influence the sports goods industry in India.
- To understand the strategies to overcome regulatory inefficiencies and exploring bundling sports products, geographical indications for mega sporting events.

2. Key methods

Research Philosophy

Pragmatism research philosophy is the selected paradigm for the present study. Concepts are only acceptable in the pragmatism research philosophy if they assist in accomplishing something. The concept of pragmatism states that no particular point of view is capable of providing all of the facts, and there could be many realities (Allemang et al. 2022). It recognizes that there are numerous methods of understanding the world and conducting research. Pragmatism promotes being receptive to innovative concepts and methods. Adopting a practical approach enables the researcher to bring together various points of view and techniques to navigate the intricate details of the sports equipment market, ranging from manufacturing to shipping, consumer preferences, and trade policies.

Research Design

Experimental research design has been chosen for the study. An experimental study design offers a framework to carry out experiments by using a scientific approach and two separate sets of factors. In this case, the initial set of variables acts as a baseline against which the subsequent group's changes can be assessed. Experimental designs need an elevated degree of control over factors (Miller et al. 2020). Numerous additional factors, such as shifts in international sectors, buying patterns, and international trade regulations, all have an effect on the sporting goods company that the researcher cannot control.

Research Approach

Researchers have applied an Inductive research approach for the entire study. Finding connections and general trends in data is the objective of inductive studies, which use more qualitative techniques such as linguistic or visual evaluation. In order to verify the theory or hypothesis, deductive studies employ more quantitative methods, such as statistical evaluation. Inductive investigations are those that proceed backward from greater generalizations and theories, beginning with specific instances or the facts. In the overall setting of this study, it includes collecting specific information from the Indian sporting goods business, such as views from clients, market developments, and trade figures.

Data Collection

Secondary data collection method has been followed by the researcher to gather information. Secondary data is information that the user does not supply. This implies that the data is publicly available and has been evaluated. Sources such as these can be regarded as secondary sources of knowledge. The Indian sporting goods industry can be studied in every aspect, as can the quantity of secondary data accessible online. Knowing the industry's present expansion trends, size of market, and export patterns can be gathered from this information.

Data Analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis has been chosen to conduct the study. In qualitative research, thematic analysis is a standard procedure. Identifying, evaluating, and creating a sense of trends in qualitative data are highlighted (Sundler et al. 2019). This kind of analysis offers a particular perspective that allows one to examine qualitative data. There are numerous players, market variables, and cultural complexity to think about in Indian sports product companies. Researchers may recognize and investigate the industry's intricacy with the assistance of thematic analysis, which reveals trends, themes, and interrelated components influencing export potential.

3. Result and Analysis

Theme 1: Enhancing International Sports Goods Export by Leveraging Bundled Products for Market Penetration and Economic Benefits

Advertising sports goods on an international level can be helped by developing packages of comparable goods that function together. According to a study, discounts of “18% to 57%” could be achieved through packaging related products (Ali & Waqas, 2022). Bundling comparable goods together can help companies save revenue by taking advantage of economies of scale and reducing their total manufacturing expenses. Contracts at international competitions might be simpler to get if athletic gear is offered in sets.

Most of the businesses listed on the “Tokyo 2020 Sole Supplier List” supplied sporting goods as a set of related or supplemental products rather than as distinct pieces of equipment (Mostafiz et al. 2023). Promoting bundles of sports items for export could be beneficial for growing Indian enterprises’ share of the market, as becoming agreements at international athletic competitions allows for a greater share of the market. Encouraging the export of athletic gear might also lower manufacturing expenses per unit, making Indian manufacturers of athletic equipment more profitable. A limited number of categories of sports items have been included in the current system of packaging in India for exporting.

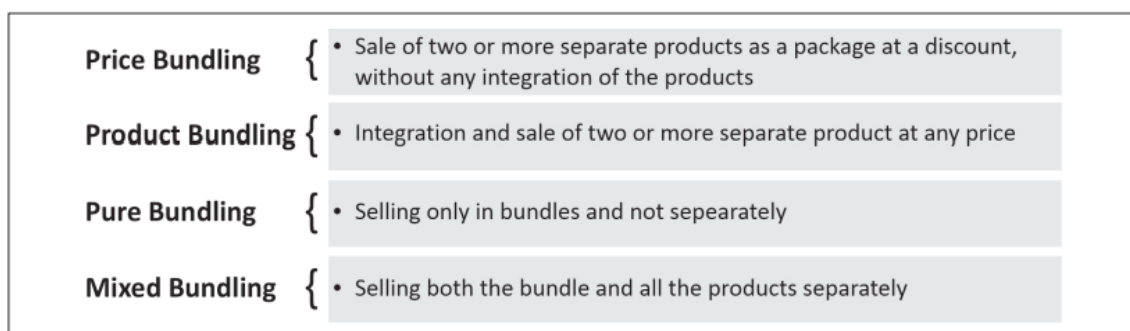


Figure 3: “Types of bundling of products and prices”

(Source: Mostafiz et al. 2023)

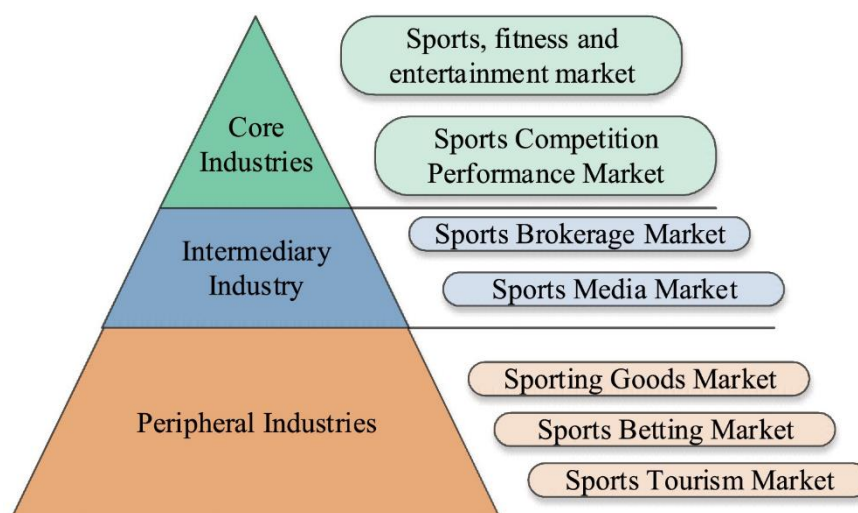
For example, cricket kits are shipped abroad from India and are typically made up of bails, balls, stumps, and bats. Bundling has not become as prevalent in the golf and table tennis apparatus sectors, but these additional sports might profit from implementing an analogous approach. Bundling athletic apparel with other clothing, especially technical ones, may increase the value of every product supplied. In sports, a variety of technical textiles are used, including padding for the arms, legs, and knees, gloves, helmets, neck guards, caps, chest guards, and others. In order to help companies determine synergies in their exporting services, it is essential to promote connections between the sporting goods sector and the technical textile sector.

Theme 2: Impact of Regulatory Inefficiencies on the Competitiveness of Sporting Goods Manufacturers in India

The present regulatory framework must be reviewed for its inefficiency, which reduces sporting goods makers’ capacity to remain competitive. For instance, the “Sports Authority of India” and the “National Sports Federation” are qualified for a duty discount on imports related to sporting items. A significant amount of India’s own demand for sports goods comes via these agencies (Faroque et al. 2022). These groups’ imports without taxes harm local businesses, particularly in these categories, if there are enough funds to satisfy demand. In instances where manufacturing in India is competitive on the international stage, such as with inflatable objects, the government might choose to eliminate this exemption. In response, the government could waive the GST on athletic supplies purchased by an association of formally accredited sports organizations. Some state regulations affecting the accessibility of natural assets additionally affect the financial competitiveness of Indian exports.

Figure 4: Development and betterment of sports industry

(Source: Faroque et al. 2022)



Willow plantations in Kashmir have been regenerated at lower rates, causing an acute shortage of resources for the cricket bat business as demand grows. The absence of sufficient state rules for restoring willow trees presents significant challenges to the long-term viability of the cricket bat business (Kaushal, 2022). In order to meet this growing need, the government of Kashmir might wish to establish a strategy for the long-term planting of willow trees throughout the region.

In order to promote the local value added in the manufacturing of clefts, the state of Kashmir additionally prohibits the national export of unprocessed Kashmir willows, requiring cricket bat manufacturers outside of Kashmir to purchase semi-finished clefts. Bats produced from Kashmir willow offer greater durability as compared to raw willow. However, it has been stated that this regulation has facilitated the illegal transportation of raw willow trees from Kashmir to clusters of producers of sports goods, where they are being sold at highly exaggerated costs. The absence of processing units for turning willow into semi-finished gaps in Kashmir’s regions outside of Srinagar and Baramulla has contributed to the developing trafficking of bare willows.

Theme 3: Strategies for Economic Growth and Market Differentiation in India that Enhances Sports Tourism and Geographic Indications

Sporting tourism has two forms including spectator sports events, where attendees go to enjoy the event, and participant sports events, which encourage tourists to take part in a sport. India could additionally systematically boost investment in sports tourism businesses with efficient regulations and financial incentives. This might boost the need for sports equipment that is part of tourist destinations. Sports tourism is an important source of revenue for the host nation, and big athletic competitions, including the “Olympics and FIFA World Cup”, produce an outsized and helpful impact on the economy and job creation (Tyagi, 2021). Marketers and manufacturers of sports items are able to profit from exposure around major athletic competitions.

India ranks less than other developing nations, like China and Brazil, according to the Global Sports Impact Index, which evaluates countries on the basis of their success in contending for and organizing global athletic competitions. Improving the sports infrastructure is an essential initial phase towards making India prepared to host an increasing number of major sporting occasions (Goslin & Kluka, 2020). “Public-private agreements (PPPs)” involving both the federal and state governments and the private sector are a possibility to set up the nation’s athletic venues. The private sector can be urged to take part in the planning, building, and maintenance of multi-purpose athletic venues via the use of modern collaborative public-private models such as “refurbish, operate, maintain, and transfer (ROMT)”, in addition to traditional approaches like “renovate, modernize, and operate (RMO)” and “build, operate, and transfer (BOT)” (Singh et al. 2020). The governing body of India might think about establishing special sports zones (SSZs) to facilitate specific attempts to enhance sports tourism facilities.

Rank	Number of Events	Country	GSI Score*
1	43	China	40,709
2	49	The USA	40,619
3	29	Japan	39,631
4	30	The UK	32,770
5	32	Russia	32,378
6	42	Canada	29,925
7	28	France	28,196
8	37	Germany	27,846
9	29	Italy	22,858
10	19	Spain	19,192
11	19	South Korea	18,827
16	9	Brazil	17,182
25	8	India	7,938

Table 1: Selected countries in GSI index, 2019

(Source: Singh et al. 2020)

Acquiring “Geographical Indications (GI)” for goods produced in an area is one approach to ensure worldwide availability. Marketers depend on GI as it helps them set their goods apart from competitors. Products’ accessibility increases when the place of origin is brought out, particularly if the location is paired with the application of time-honored methods for manufacturing and processing (Mohammadi & Dickson, 2021). There are no acknowledged GIs in the sporting goods company, despite the fact that certain products are unique to India. Cricket bats constructed from Kashmir willow are highly sought-after, as the willow plants from which they are produced are considered to be the world’s best.

The manufacturing of Kashmir willow bats, which began in the 19th century and makes up 60% of India’s overall bat output, is still going robust. Kashmiri cricket bats retail for a maximum price of Rs. 1000 each, while their English willow equivalents sell for something from US\$ 220 to US\$ 450 for each in the worldwide market. Kashmir willow bats tend to be more expensive than those from England, as they are thought to be heavier. The regional cricket bat business could profit from global exposure with the introduction of a GI designation for Kashmir willow, which would draw attention to the distinctive characteristics of the substance (Dhinakaran & Kesavan, 2020). Better product recognition, lower prices, better advertising and marketing, and eventually a higher value for export might come from attaching the GI mark to Kashmir willow bat.

Theme 4: Enhancing Market Positioning and Export Potential in the Sporting Goods Industry by Leveraging Geographical Indications for Kashmir Willow Bats

Acquiring Geographical Indications (GI) for goods produced in an area is one approach to ensure worldwide availability. Marketers depend on GI as it helps them set their goods apart from competitors (Gaurav et al. 2020). Products’ accessibility increases when the place of origin is brought out, particularly if the location is paired with the application of time-honoured methods for manufacturing and processing. There are no acknowledged GIs in the sporting goods company, despite the fact that certain products are unique to India. Cricket bats constructed from Kashmir willow are highly sought-after, as the willow plants from which they are produced are considered to be the world’s best.

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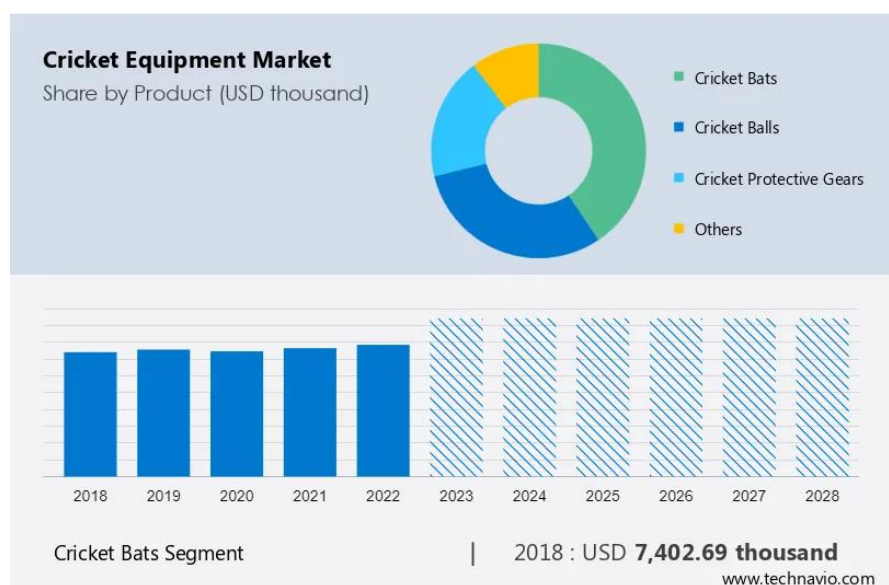


Figure 5: Analysis of cricket equipment market

(Source: Ahmad & Rafeeq, 2022)

Better product recognition, lower prices, better advertising and marketing, and eventually a higher value for export might come from attaching the GI mark to Kashmir willow bat. In order to receive the advantages of GI status, GI businesses have to be regarded as reliable and highly regarded in the market, with distinctive positioning (Khanday, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to create and develop the GI trademark for Kashmir willow bats and set up a mechanism that ensures that all things sold through the GI brand label are of the highest possible standard.

Theme 5: Overcoming Barriers in Global Bidding for Mega Sporting Events

Mega sporting occasions require global bidding for athletic supplies. One way to increase brand awareness and exports is to get agreements on such occasions. However, Indian participation in significant occasions, including the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, has proven disappointing (Malik et al. 2020). In contrast, athletic equipment exports from Pakistan and China have risen substantially as a consequence of the two countries' roles as the primary suppliers of these products during major sporting events. The global competition can be laborious and complicated due to the numerous rules and guidelines placed by the country that is hosting or the sport's federation. The submission process encompasses multiple phases and suggests expenses for the bidding companies. Nowadays, there has not been a lot of participation from Indian manufacturers in the global bid procedure. The insufficient turnout can be explained by a number of variables, such as a lack of understanding about the incidents, the substantial costs of bidding on them, and a shortage of actual participation from the host nations (Sroka, 2021). The governing body of India can decide to help qualified exporters at different phases of the process of bidding in order to motivate more Indian businesses to submit proposals for agreements for overseas functions. Moreover, if the volume of contracts is low, it might not be financially feasible for Indian businesses to participate in the tendering procedure.

However, this involvement might be critical with regard to building respect on the international stage. Certain fees and payments have to be uploaded by applicants before submitting bidding documents. Bidders have to include different guarantees from banks with their proposals, which will lead to further financial costs (Gopane & Mmotla, 2019). For many small and medium-sized businesses, these prices are beyond the idea. A system for splitting the costs related to bidding in most of the most significant international events, including FIFA, UEFA, the "ICC Cricket World Cup", the Olympics, and others, can be developed by governments to assist sports goods businesses in their attempts at supply bids at major occasions.

3. Conclusion

The sports goods company has an unfulfilled export potential of \$227.4 million. Once this goal succeeds, exports in this industry might exceed \$500 million. The opportunity is ready for India to deal with the challenges in the sporting goods sector, improve domestic abilities, and boost export competitiveness.

Product and market diversity, building capacity for international bidding, advancement of bundling of supplementary sports items, elimination of regulatory bottlenecks, branding of Kashmir willow bats via a GI, Cosco Basketball and investigation of the possibility of raising tariffs on imports from China are all essential aspects for enhancing the competitiveness of the sporting goods sector.

To increase the manufacturing of Sports Goods in India, the Government of India introduced the Make in India [Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan]. To help the new businesses in the Country, the Government of India launched the Start-up India, These are the positive components to increase the production of Sports Equipment, to lower the Manufacturing cost and increase the Export of Sports Goods at Global level.

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