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How the IPL had it coming

The IPL has been suspended; the bio-bubble has burst. But were the signals – the negativity already visible? The Indian Institute of Human Brands (IIHB) and the Rediffusion Consumer Lab (Red Lab) had been tracking consumer sentiment for the past three weeks: the bomb dropped on the IPL almost on cue.



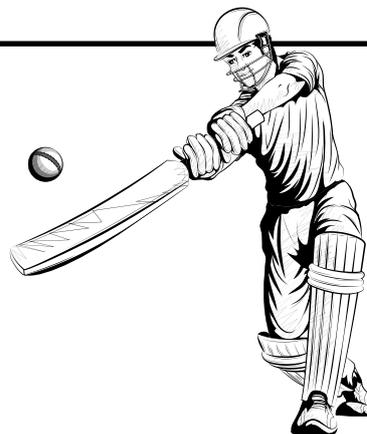
Call it a premonition. Or call it prudent guess work. Or call it gut feeling. Or, well just call it common sense. The Indian Institute of Human Brands (IIHB) and the Rediffusion Consumer Lab (more popularly called Red Lab) started a small consumer survey on 17 & 18 April, reaching out to 482 respondents (M=271, F=211) asking the following questions :

- **Should the IPL have been played at all this year?**
- **Given the pandemic, should the IPL have been played overseas again?**
- **Do you think watching IPL every evening provides an escape from all the pain, grief and death all around?**
- **Are you watching more/less/same of the IPL as last year?**
- **Do you remember ads and celebrities from the IPL telecast?**
- **Given the current mood, do the ads on IPL attract you? Would you buy the brands being sold?**
- **If IPL were to be cancelled, would you miss the game?**

The same questions were asked to the same respondents the next week on 24 & 25 April. There was a 22% drop rate of respondents 'not available' or 'not contactable' from the previous week. A third round of the same questions were administered on 1 & 2 May, with the drop-out rate down 18% of the original sample.

The responses make for interesting reading:

Should the IPL have been played at all this year?



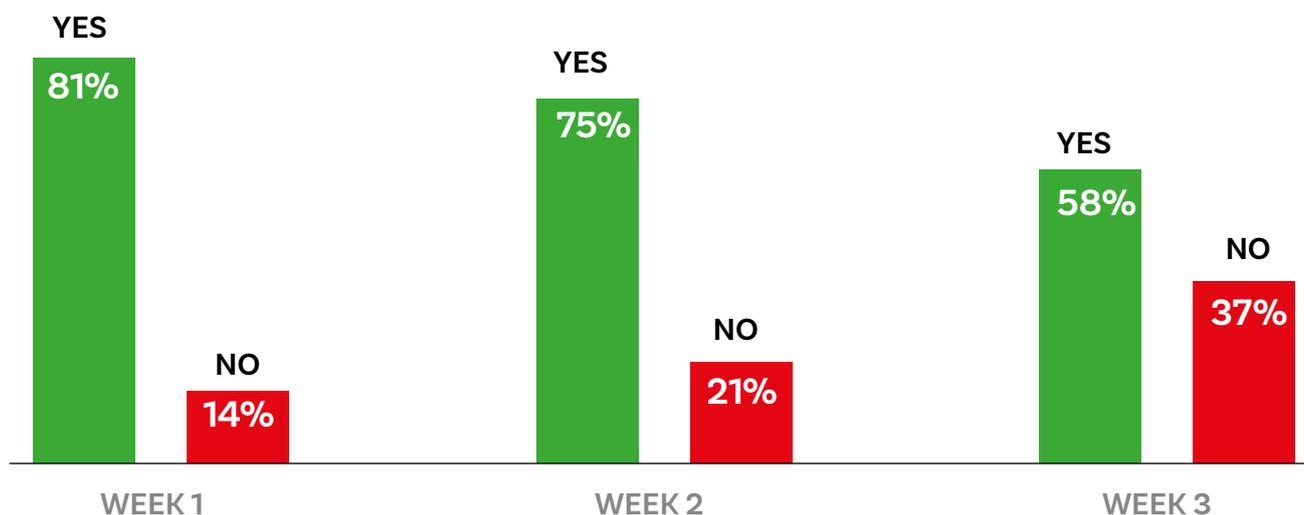
The sentiment started pretty positive at 81% saying 'yes', 14% saying 'no' and the rest 'maybe/don't know' in Week 1.

By Week 2, it was 75% 'yes', 21% 'no' and balance undecided.

Week 3 saw a big plunge with only 58% still saying 'yes'. 'No' was up to 37%, the numbers nearly doubling. It seems the grim reality of the pandemic upsurge across India was finally catching up with India's biggest sports entertainment show!

This feedback in Week 3 had already been recorded before news of the IPL bio-bubble being breached had become public. So the decline in sentiment cannot be attributed to actual negative news from the IPL front.

Overall the majority as of the last weekend was still in favour of holding the IPL, but the decline in support over 3 weeks has been visibly significant.



Given the pandemic, should the IPL have been played overseas again?

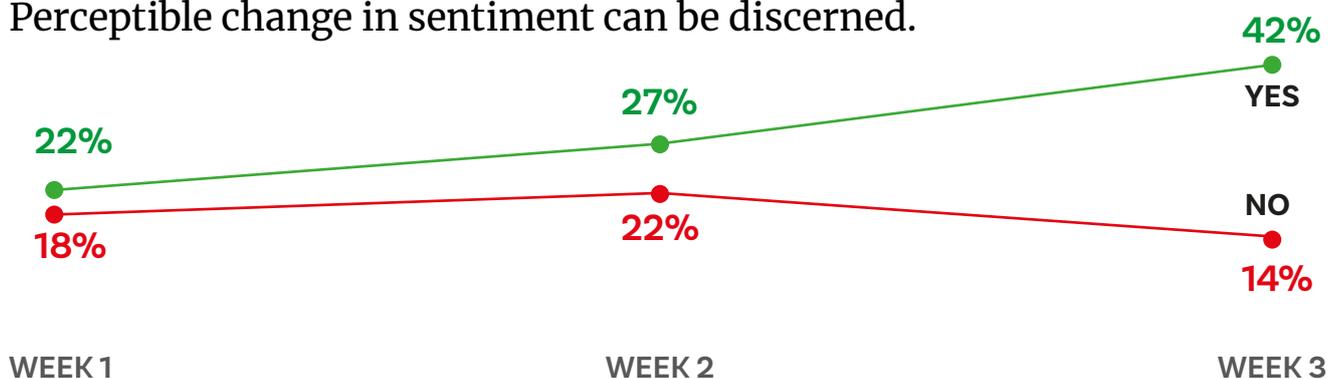


In Week 1, 22% said 'yes', 18% said 'no'. Rest didn't care.

In Week 2, 27% said 'yes', 22% said 'no'.

In Week 3, 42% said 'yes', 14% said 'no'.

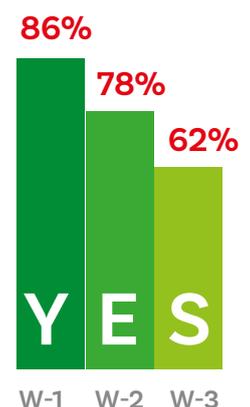
Perceptible change in sentiment can be discerned.



Do you think watching IPL every evening provides an escape from all the pain, grief and death all around?



Overwhelming majority in Week 1 said 'yes'; at 86%. Dipped by Week 2 to 78%. Sharp dip in Week 3 to 62%. The majority would still want to continue to see the IPL. But maybe true sentiment or anti-sentiment calibration needs to go beyond quantitative numbers ... the 33% fall in three weeks is more eloquent indicator of the mood.



Are you watching more/less/same of the IPL as last year?



In Week 1 itself, 27% respondents said they were watching less of the League. This had climbed to 32% in Week 2. By Week 3 there were 38% who said they were watching less of the IPL.

Subsequent reportage of BARC data on viewership of IPL seems to bear out the feedback. An average of 105 million unique viewers watched 17 matches in the first two weeks of IPL 2021, registering a dip of 9.5% over last year. In 2020, an average of 116 million unique viewers watched 14 matches in the first two weeks of the league. So, the research findings are in sync with those of actual viewership data.

**WATCHING
LESS
OF THE IPL**

WEEK 1
27%

WEEK 2
32%

WEEK 3
38%

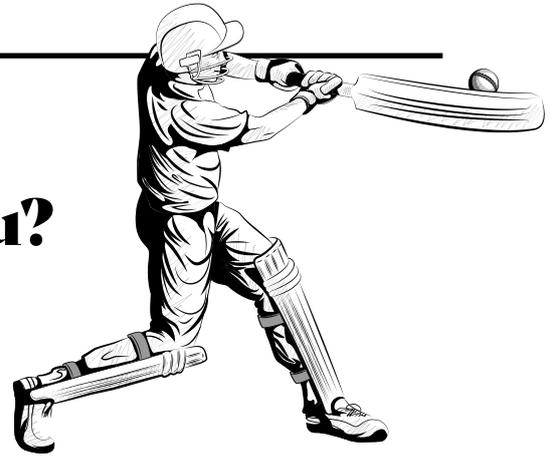
Do you remember ads and celebrities from the IPL telecast?



Ad recall for the IPL remained exceedingly good. So was the recall of celebrities. IHB last week separately published a report on Brand & Celebrity Recall at the IPL. MS Dhoni and Ranveer Singh topped the recall.



Given the current mood, do the ads on IPL attract you? Would you buy the brands being sold?



The biggest dip in the entire survey was noticed in response to this subject.

84% respondents said they loved the ads and would buy the brands in Week 1. Support remained nearly constant at 79%. But plummeted in Week 3 to just 52%, a notch above the half way mark.

The important inference from this feedback could be that if the IPL had not been suspended, brands continuing to advertise on IPL may actually have started to hurt. The medium really is the message. The cancellation of IPL may therefore turn out to be a blessing for brands who were advertising on it, provided they can in some way manage to pull out of the deal or postpone their releases.

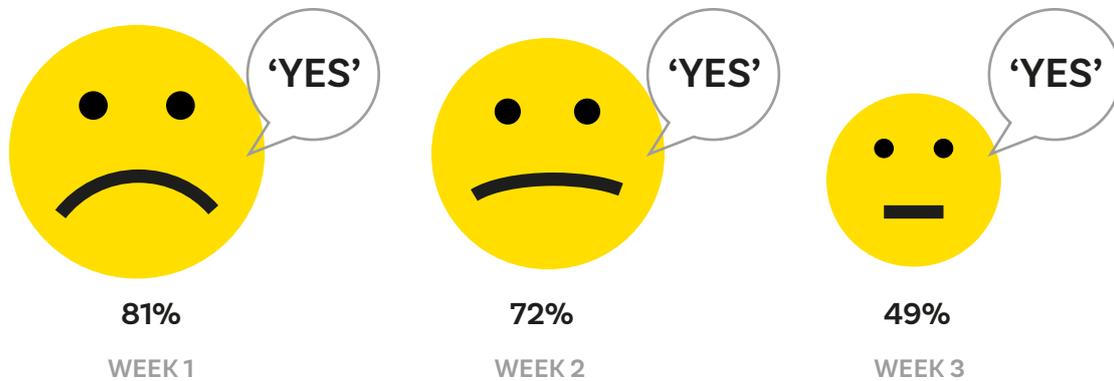


If IPL were to be cancelled, would you miss the game?

This question was asked all three weeks, and much before the announcement of the suspension.

81% had said 'yes' in Week 1. Dropped to 72% in Week 2. Actually dipped to 49% in Week 3. Viewers were starting to get wary of the IPL.

Would you miss the game?



“Consumers are very perceptive. They are also very sensitive. Somehow there was growing discontent with the IPL ... it was seen to be an extravaganza of greed ... so much death and devastation all around but fat cat players romping around hitting sixes. Not a single black band of sympathy or support ... that may have reduced the anti-sentiment somewhat,” says **Dr. Sandeep Goyal**, Chief Mentor of IIBB.

“Sentiment analysis always gives you early warning signals”, adds **Navonil Chatterjee** who heads the recently set up Rediffusion Consumer Lab (Red Lab). “It is then for you to pick up the signals and either act on them or ignore them”.



Indian Institute of Human Brands (IIHB)
1401, Lodha Supremus,
Worli,
Mumbai 400018



Rediffusion Consumer Labs
Lotus Corporate Park,
18th Flr, A-Wing, Unit No.1801-1802,
Graham Firth Steel Compound,
Off Western Express Highway,
Goregaon (East), Mumbai 400063

