

Social Media presence of Women Athlete

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Abstract

This research seeks to explore the Social Media presence of an athlete and perspective of Indian women athletes. The objective of this research is to find out an increase in participation of Indian women athletes in Asian Games and Olympic games in the last 10 years and also nature and content of engagement of social media of Indian women athletes. The data to know the change in the number of women participation is collected through the secondary source and to know the nature of the content of social media handle content analysis is done. The findings of the study unveiled that the participation of women has increased in the Olympics and in Asian Games; it has increased, then decreased and then again increased. The findings also tell that Indian female athletes used social media for brand promotion and various other factors.

Key Words: *Sports, Social Media, Female Athletes*

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1. Introduction

Sports has always been an integral part of our life. It has a long history. Cave paintings were found in France which shows portrayals of wrestling and sprinting which are believed to be of 15300 years back. The first recorded event of sports takes us 3000 years back. Greeks were the first one to introduce sports in the world. In the early civilisation, sports like throwing of spears, rocks, and stakes etc. and various other sports which involve fighting were popular among people. Ancient Greek organised the first ever Olympic Games in 776 BC at Athens. The 19th century marks the beginning of various sporting events around the world. For example, in 1876 the first Baseball tournament was organized in the US, in 1877 first Wimbledon was held and also the first Cricket match was played between Australia and England. In 1896 at Athens, the first modern Olympic Games were held.

Sports is defined as a physical activity which requires prowess, skill and competitive spirit to ensure healthy competition among the athletes. Technology has played a significant role in making sports popular among people and ensures the entertainment spook up. Various modern day technologies are used in sporting events nowadays. For e.g. DRS (Decision review system) in Cricket, VAR (video assistant referee), Goal-line technology in Football etc. A person engaged in sports is called sportsperson or an athlete. But, who is an Athlete?

Figure 1



Source: Digital Collection, TAMU Libraries

1.1 Who is an Athlete?

"Athlete" is a romanization of the Greek: athlētēs, one who takes an interest in a challenge. As indicated by Webster's Third Unabridged Dictionary Athlete is, "an individual who is dynamic in games: as (a): one who takes part in the games of the field and particularly in fishing and hunting.

An athlete is an individual who contends in at least one game that includes physical quality, speed or perseverance. The use of the term to the individuals who partake in different exercises, for example, horse riding or driving, is fairly dubious. Athletes might be experts or beginners. Most expert athletes have especially well-created bodies gotten by broad physical preparing and severe exercise joined by an exacting dietary routine. Below given are the definition of Athlete by various websites and dictionaries.

According to Merriam Webster "Athlete is defined as a person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports, or games requiring physical strength, agility or stamina".

According to Thefreedictionary "Athlete is defined as a person trained or gifted in exercises or contests involving physical activity, coordination, stamina, or strength".

According to Oxforddictionaries "Athlete is defined as a person who is proficient in sports and other forms of physical exercise".

1.2 History of Women Athletes in World Sports

In the ancient Civilisation, women had their separate tournament known as Heraean games played in honour of Goddess Hera. As the tournament didn't allow men to participate, therefore the tournament was not recognised much. Since the participation of women in sports was not encouraged, thereby, they were not allowed to participate in the 1896 Olympics games. However, in the 19th and 20th-century, the participation of women in sports (as a player) started. During the late 19th century, sports like Archery, Horse riding, Golf etc. were enjoyed by the women of upper social class. The 20th century was the pioneer year for women participation in sports. The main reason behind this was feminism movements in Europe and North America.

Women participated in the modern Olympics games for the very first time was in 1900, before that only male was allowed to participate. First women's Olympiad was held in 1921 and also women's world game was held in 1922, 1926, 1930 and 1934.

Figure 2: Leaders in Their Field: Women in Golf



Source: Mike Buteau

The awareness among women about their rights and feminist movements in the 19th century acted as a base for the solid foundation. The participation of women in sports is highest in the 21st century. Various governing bodies are formed to promote and develop women sports in the world. In 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics women competed in 27 sports (137 events) as compared to men who participated in 28 sports (175 events). A number of professional women league was started in various countries such as women's Premier League in England, T20 women Big Bash in Australia and many more. Moreover, various tournaments at the international level are also inaugurated such as FIFA Women's World Cup, Women Hockey World Cup etc. In total, women sports is growing at a fast pace.

1.3 History of Sports in India

The history of sports in India takes us back to the Vedic era. The motto of traditional Olympic Games i.e. "For the Honour of my country and the Glory of sport" resembled the Atharvaveda mantra "Duty is in my right hand and the fruit of victory in my left".

Various games like Chess, Snooker, Cards, and Snakes and ladders were originated in India and then these games were transmitted to various parts of the world. Moreover, with times further changes and modernisation were done to these games. When Mughals were ruling India another game known as "Pehlwani" was originated. Furthermore, Polo also originated in

India during the colonial period in the 19th century. India under British rule (British India) competed in a number of Olympic Games and won several medals, notably in Field Hockey.

Figure 3: Chess in India



Source: Dennis

In the post Independence era, India hosted the first ever Asian games in 1951 and again in 1982. To promote sports in the country ministry of youth affairs and sports was set up in 1982. Over a period of time, the South Asian superpower has hosted a number of sports events. Not only India hosted top-level tournaments but also participated in the top level tournament around the world. Indian Cricket team won the cricket world cup in 1987 and then again in 2011. In 2011 they hosted the event. Moreover, Indian athletes started participating in the Olympics Games, Asian Games and Commonwealth Games. With investment in sports in the country, Indian athlete started to perform and won medals at the International tournament. Indian athlete achieved great height in sports. Some of them are Marry Kom, Saina Nehwal, Sania Mirza, Sachin Tendulkar etc. Sachin Tendulkar is the only sportsperson to win the Bharat Ratna.

Cricket is the most popular sport in the country. And no doubt football is the most popular sports in the world, but it is at the developing stage in the country. The inception of ISL (Indian Super League) has spread football plague among the people, and the future of Indian football is bright.

1.4 History of Women Athletes in India

Sports do not discriminate between race, sex, colour, and gender. It is for all, but the patriarchal Indian society has created a gap between female and male athletes in India. However, with time the gap has been closed, but it is still there. In 1951 Asian Games India won total 51 medals out of which only 2 medals were won by women. The reason might be a lack of women participation or lack of facilities provided to them.

Figure 4: From ‘no skills’ to master planner



Source: Google Images

India first participation in the Olympics games was in 1900 and since then it has participated in every Olympics except 1984. In 1924 first time Indian women athlete participated in the summer Olympics. Till 2004 women athletes in the Indian contingent for the Olympics was less than 10. It was only in 1980 Olympics 18 women represented India. In the recent summer Olympics games (2016 Rio de Janeiro) 54 women represented India as compared to 66 by men. The gap has decreased over time. The participation of women in sports in India has increased with the beginning of the 21st century. Karnam Malleswari is the first women athlete to win an Olympic medal. She won a bronze medal in weightlifting at Sydney Olympic in 2000. Till now, Indian women athletes have won 5 medals in Olympics which include 1 silver and 4 bronze medal. P.V Sindhu (Badminton), Saina Nehwal (Badminton), Sakshi Malik (Wrestling), Mary Kom (Boxing) and Karnam Malleswari are the 5 women athletes who won a medal at Olympics for India.

Contribution of women in sports in India is increasing at a very rapid pace, but still, there is a long way to go. The differences are still there which are yet to be abolished. If the things are planned and resources are equally distributed then the day is not far away when Indian women will make the country proud by winning Gold medals at Summer Olympics games.

2. Review of Literature

In the Gender Inequality Issue of the Global Sports Salaries Survey, 2017, it was duly noted that the gender pay gap in Sport is more than in politics, business, medicine or even academia.

In a report presented by Bridge in 2018, Gender discrimination in Sports itself can be witnessed in various forms such as the gender pay gap between the male and female athletes, the sexist attitude towards female sportspersons or even sexual harassment incidents. No doubt facts and statistics endorse this discrimination, but the key to understanding the reasons for such inequality is essential.

BCCI's 2018 retainer contracts for its senior people players exemplified the equivalent, where the most astounding workers, for example, 'A' grade ladies cricketers (Rs.50 L) get a large portion of the compensation of the 'C' grade least procuring men cricketers (Rs.1Cr). Additionally, the men's group have been offered pay of 7 crores for every annum for cricketers of the 'A+' evaluation or 'top entertainers', abandoning no such arrangement for the ladies' group. The ladies of the Indian Football crew notwithstanding their present World positioning of 59 procure between five to ten lakh rupees, while the men's group draw around 70 lakhs for every year. Furthermore, indeed, the zenith game of India, 'Hockey' likewise has a ten times wage hole between the two its groups.

Billie Jean King in her article *Using Sports for Social Change* (2007), discusses how she broke all the barrier of Gender discrimination in sports. She was one of the first few to advocate for equality by pushing for equal prize money. In 1973, the 39 Grand Slam title holders had founded a separate Women's Tennis Association (WTA) in retort to her meagre U.S. Open prize money and shunned all taboos by beating Bobby Riggs in the "Battle of the Sexes" game.

According to research done by Elmer Spreitzer, Eldon E. Snyder and Joseph E. Kivlin concerning females athletes (1978) it was found out that various sports are ranked based on the appropriation for women. There is a stigma in sports involvement. Swimming was declared as

the most desirable sports followed by tennis, basketball, softball etc. It was found out that college women who were participating actively participating in sports were much more favourable in their perceptions of sport as appropriate for females that were the control group of nonathletic college women. The college women who were not participating in athletics were quite traditional in their perceptions; 73 percent of them expressed the feeling that athletics tend to detract from one's feminine qualities.

The research also found that parents of female athletes are interested in sports as compared to parents of non-athletes. In terms of encouraging their child to participate in sports non-athletes' parents are far behind in encouraging their parents when compared to athlete parents. This pattern is especially authentic for Gymnastics. The study also found out that female athletes received encouragement from their parents, peer and coaches.

Hilal Ahmad in her Journal women sports in India-Constraints, Challenges, Complications and its remedies (2015) discusses the Female Athletes present day non transmittable infections, for example, stress, heftiness, hypertension, diabetes; hormone brokenness prompts in action, unfit to achieve the everyday exercises inclined to damage, for example, the osteoporosis condition. Consequently, they are the maker, creator and servers to the general public, these requirements ought to be wiped out for the advancement of ladies wellbeing. Crusade for all ladies sports interest should empowered in schools and in colleges. Government should lead the mindfulness program for ladies sports support and for their consolation. Also, in those states where religion is turning into a limitation should concoct a few choices with the goal that their ladies can likewise take an interest in games also, carry on with a superior and sound life.

Travis Schedler and Audrey Wagstaff in their Journal Exposure to Women's sports: Changing Attitude towards Female Athletes (2018) found a sensational increment in the quantity of females taking an interest in games in the course of recent years. As females are expanding their game cooperation, sports fans are ending up progressively intrigued by women' games. While more young Women Athletes are taking part in games than at any other time and sports fans are winding up increasingly intrigued by females' games, numerous games fans and faultfinders contend that ladies' games are simply exhausting; they grumble that ladies' games are not so energizing as men's games. Maybe, sports fans are not inspired by ladies' games since they are secured fundamentally not as much as men's games, demonstrating that they are less significant and less intriguing than men's games.

Increment in exposure and awareness to regarding women games will automatically interested in Females athletes and games and on the other hand it will act as force to eradicate prejudice against females Athletes. Moreover, more will be the coverage of women sports more will be the exposure to audience because when the exposure is more the changes of favourable reactions are very high. ‘

Janet Fink in her research Female athletes, women's sport, and the sport media commercial complex: Have we really “come a long way, baby”? (2015) found out that among 10 most popular sports blogs in the United States, Clavio and Eagleman (2011) only 7.1% of images in those blogs featured a female, but these images were significantly more likely to be sexual in nature than were the male images

She also found out that the actual production techniques utilized for men’s and women’s sport are markedly different and result in rendering women’s sport as less important and exciting . Studies of the men’s and women’s NCAA basketball tournament revealed that more shot variations are used in the men’s game which results in more engaging production and greater excitement. Greater use of on-screen graphics occurred in the men’s championship compared to the women’s, and there were often video frames of longer duration, both of which can influence consumer perceptions of excitement. The camera angles in women’s beach volleyball was analysed and it was found out that camera angles and close ups were used to emphasize women’s chests and buttocks. In the analysis of 2004 Olympics’ track and field events it was found out that coverage of male athletes used more of everything: more time, more segments, more variation in field of view, more variation in point of view, more slow motion, and more use of rail-cam.

3. Objectives

- a. To know the change in the number of Indian women athletes in the last 10 years.
- b. To examine the nature and content of social media engagement of Indian women athletes.

4. Methodology

The methodology that has been used for this study is qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis focuses on the underlying deeper meaning of the text. Twitter is social media platform selected for the research. Among the various social media sites Twitter is selected because it is the most used and trending social site right now. Twitter account of

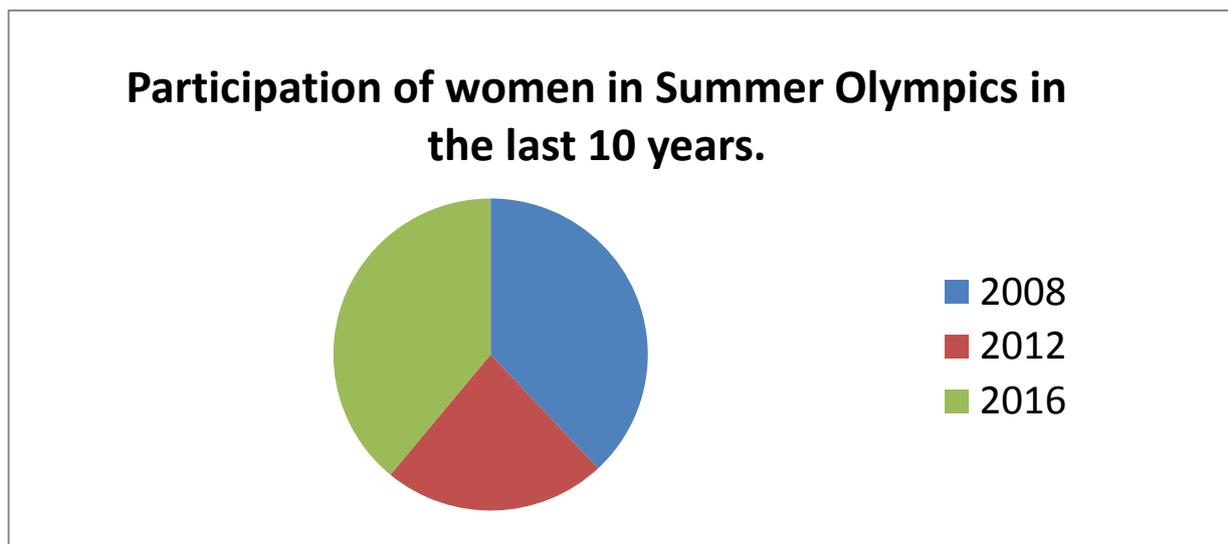
four Indian female athletes i.e. P.V Sindhu, Mary Kom, Sakshi Malik and Sania Mirza is analysed and based on the data collected Social media analytics is prepared.

The data of Indian athletes participated in the summer Olympic Games and Asian Games in the past ten years i.e. 2008-2108 is collected and based on it change in participation of women is derived. The research is based on secondary data collected from various credible websites and mix methods are used.

5. Graphical representation of the data and analysis

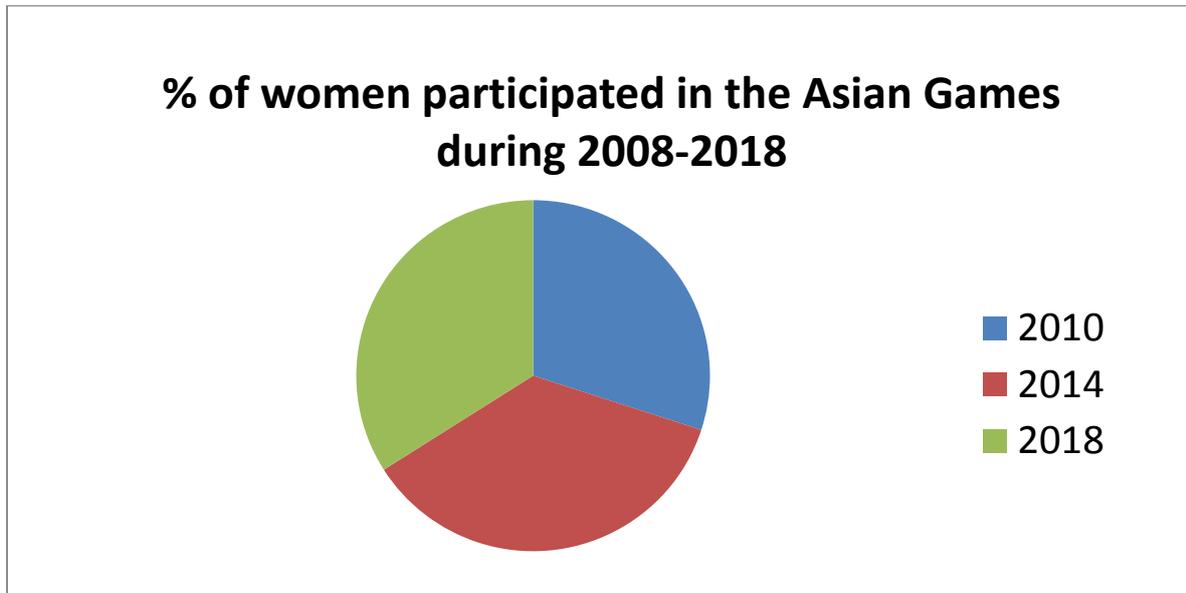
As portrayed in figure 1, in the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, there's 45% women participation and in 2012 the participation falls to 28% with a rise in 2016 where the participation reaches 46%.

Figure 5



Source: Primary Data

Figure 6



Source: Primary Data

As portrayed in figure 2, in 2010 Asian Games, there's 30% women participation and in 2014 Asian Games the participation of women increases to 36% but again in 2018 Asian Games participation falls to 34%.

5.1 Social Media Analytics

5.1.1 Presence of Athletes on Twitter

Table 1

Name of the Athlete	Followers on Twitter
P.V Sindhu	2.7 Million
Mary Kom	10.1 Thousand
Sakshi Malik	401.3 Thousand
Sania Mirza	8.9 Million

Source: Data curated from Twitter

Based on the data collected through analysis of social media handle (Twitter) of four Indian women athletes i.e P.V Sindhu, Mary Kom, Sakshi Malik and Sania Mirza it is found out that Saina Mirza is the most followed athlete among the four selected ones. She has more than 8.9 million followers on Twitter. After her P.V Sindhu has 2.7 million, Sakshi Malik has 401.3 thousand followers and Mary Kom has 10.1 million followers.

Table 2

Name of the Athlete	Number of Tweets
P.V Sindhu	12
Mary Kom	11
Sakshi Malik	11
Sania Mirza	26

Source: Data curated from Twitter

Sania Mirza is the most active athletes among the four athletes. She has tweeted 26 times in the month of March. Whereas, P.V Sindhu has 12 tweets and Sakshi Malik and Mary Kom have 11 tweets.

Table 3

Name of the Athlete	Number of Retweets
P.V Sindhu	5
Mary Kom	0
Sakshi Malik	1
Sania Mirza	8

Source: Data curated from Twitter

In retweet department also Saina Mirza has bagged first position. She has 8 retweets to her name. After her 2nd place P.V Sindhu has 5 retweets, 3rd place Sakshi malik has just 1 retweet and Mary Kom didn't retweet in the month of March.

5.1.2 Issues athletes talk about

Table 4

Name of Athletes	Brand Promotion
P.V Sindhu	Yes
Mary Kom	Yes
Sakshi Malik	Yes
Sania Mirza	Yes

Source: Data curated from Twitter

An Athlete earns a lot of their money through endorsements. They use social media platforms for promoting their brands and products. All the four selected female athletes used twitter for Brand promotion. Despite difference in their fields this is something which makes unites them.

Table 5

Name of Athletes	Women Rights
P.V Sindhu	Yes
Mary Kom	No
Sakshi Malik	No
Sania Mirza	No

Source: Data curated from Twitter

In the 21st century one of the most burning and trending issues is Women’s right and following the trend P.V Sindhu has posted her say on the women’s right on her twitter profile. Whereas on the other hand, Mary Kom, Sakshi Malik and Sania Mirza didn’t post anything about women’s right.

Table 6

Name of Athletes	Women's Day
P.V Sindhu	Yes
Mary Kom	Yes
Sakshi Malik	Yes
Sania Mirza	Yes

Source: Data curated from Twitter

Every year Women's day is celebrated on 8th march around the world. Keeping in mind the occasion all the four female athletes wished women's day through twitter and provided a word of inspiration for their fans and family.

Table 7

Name of Athletes	Patriotism
P.V Sindhu	Yes
Mary Kom	Yes
Sakshi Malik	Yes
Sania Mirza	Yes

Source: Data curated from Twitter

As far as the return of wing commander Abhinantan Vartanam is concerned all 4 athletes welcomed him with the utmost respect and posted a tweet to welcome him back. This shows their love for the country and defines their patriotism attitude.

Table 8

Name of Athletes	Social Wok
P.V Sindhu	Yes
Mary Kom	No
Sakshi Malik	Yes
Sania Mirza	No

Source: Data curated from Twitter

When it comes to social work Athletes are always the one to help and let other develop. P.V Sindhu and Sakshi Malik use social media for social work and posted tweets to aware people about different social organisations. Whereas, Mary Kom and Saina Mirza didn't tweet anything related to social work in the month of March.

Table 9

Name of Athletes	Updates
P.V Sindhu	Match
Mary Kom	Training
Sakshi Malik	Match
Sania Mirza	Training

Source: Data curated from Twitter

All 4 athletes uses Twitter to ensure their fans are updated with their training schedules, match results and information. In the month of March, P.V Sindhu and Sakshi Malik provided match updates and Saina Mirza and Mary Kom shared their training details through twitter.

6. Conclusion

Women Athletes are not just athletes, but role models, they talk of different issues and in their own ways, motivate other women to pursue sports. The number of women athletes in India, are increasing. With athletes like, Harpreet Kaur, Dipa Kamarkar, Saina Nehawal, Mary Kom, coming from humble backgrounds, have seen difficult times both from society and family. Movies like Dangal and Mary Kom, show their story and inspire many other women. In this research, the researcher has analysed, Twitter accounts and social media presence of 4 women athletes, P.V. Sindhu, Sania Mirza, Sakshi Malik and Mary Kom. Though they are all using their accounts for Brand Promotions, but through their accounts, they try to also fulfil their social responsibilities by talking about occasions such as women's day, their rights patriotism and also different avenues which can help budding women Athletes. Further their insights on diet and exercise can further act as guides for these athletes. They act as mentors from distance and also inspiration.

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