

Economic Impact of Women's Cricket in Developing Countries - How Investment in Women's Cricket Contributes To Sports Industries, Tourism, and Employment in Nations Like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka

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DOI: 10.46609/IJSSER.2025.v10i10.011 URL: <https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2025.v10i10.011>

Received: 20 September 2025 / Accepted: 11 October 2025 / Published: 22 October 2025

ABSTRACT

This article explores the economic implications of women's cricket in the case study countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, identifying a clear link between investment and sport, tourism and jobs in the region. The research utilizes a qualitative comparative case study analysis of secondary data, identifying a clear link between investment and economic impact. India has launched the first commercially viable Women's Premier League, Pakistan and Bangladesh are slowly professionalising their leagues through central contracts, and Sri Lanka is seeking to connect the sport to tourism. This economic engagement leads to professional job pathways for women who enter women's cricket, and women's cricket offers women's sport the potential for economic growth, and presents future research opportunities.

Keywords: Women's Cricket, Economic Impact, Sports Industry, Tourism Economy, Employment Generation, Developing Countries, South Asia, Sports Economics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The international sports industry is a large and expanding part of the world economy. In this industry, the most notable change is the growth of women's sport. Long underfunded and undervalued women's sport are now being supported with significant investment, media visibility and fans (e.g., television, attendance, merchandise). This is more than a social issue, it is significant from an economic perspective, tapping into markets that generate enormous commercial value. All the focus, either academic or media, has gone to developed West markets, the issue with all of this are the issues developing nations are realizing, where sport is a part of identity and culture, are somewhat lost.

This study examines women's cricket in South Asia, where the game is more than a game, it is a cultural institution. The South Asian countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka have a colonial cricket background, but have manias and madness to their cricket. For years their nation's cricket manias/madness was viewed as a male activity. However, the recent and rapid growth of women's cricket presents a compelling case study of economic development driven by gender-inclusive investment in sport. The rising popularity of national women's teams and the advent of professional leagues are creating a ripple effect that extends far beyond the boundary rope.

The central research problem this paper addresses is the lack of a structured understanding of the economic contributions of women's cricket in these developing economies. While there is a general acknowledgment of its growth, the specific financial mechanisms through which this growth translates into tangible benefits for national economies are not well-documented or analyzed. This paper seeks to fill this gap by examining three primary channels of economic impact: the direct and indirect contributions to the sports industry, the stimulation of the tourism sector, and the creation of new and diverse employment opportunities.

The objective of this research is therefore threefold. First, it aims to map the key financial inflows into women's cricket in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, including broadcasting rights, sponsorships, and gate receipts. Second, it analyzes how this investment is fostering a more robust and diversified domestic sports industry.

The significance of this study is both academic and practical. Academically, it contributes to the fields of sports economics, development studies, and gender studies by providing a detailed, comparative analysis of a previously under-researched area. Practically, its findings offer valuable insights for sport's governing bodies, government policymakers, and corporate investors. Understanding the economic potential of women's cricket can inform more effective policy-making, encourage greater corporate investment, and ultimately, help harness the power of sport to achieve broader economic and social development goals in the region.

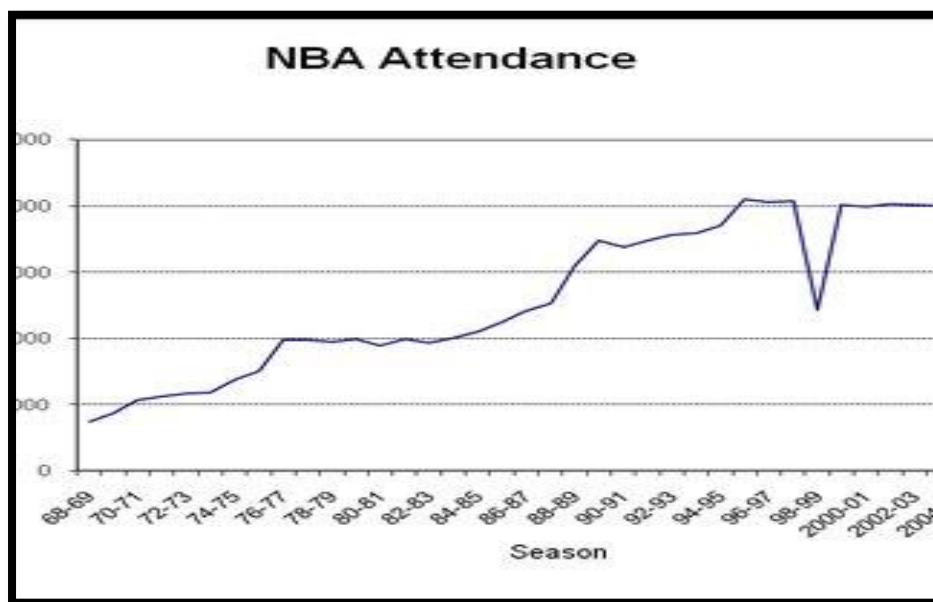
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is grounded in the intersection of several key theoretical areas: the economics of professional sports, the role of mega-events in tourism, and the concept of sport as a driver for labor market development. A review of the existing literature reveals distinct streams of research that inform the present analysis.

According to Lee Ludvigsen et al., (2022), the first stream concerns the commercialization of sport. The economic model of modern professional sport is typically characterized by a triangular relationship between the sporting event, the media, and corporate sponsors. Media

companies pay substantial fees for broadcasting rights, which in turn provides a platform for sponsors to reach a large and engaged audience. This model generates the revenue necessary to pay athletes, develop infrastructure, and promote the sport. Historically, this lucrative cycle was almost exclusively the domain of men's sports. The literature on sports economics has extensively modeled the revenue streams for established male leagues, but frameworks specifically adapted for the nascent commercialization of women's sports, particularly in non-Western contexts, are less developed. This paper extends this traditional model to analyze its application and adaptation within the women's cricket ecosystem in South Asia.

Figure 1: The Economics of Professional Sports



Source: researchgate.net,2025

Sardi et al., (2025), suggests a second body of literature focuses on the economic impact of hosting sporting events, with a strong emphasis on tourism. Studies have long debated the net economic benefit of hosting mega-events like the Olympics or the FIFA World Cup. While some argue these events are a significant catalyst for tourism, infrastructure development, and urban regeneration, others caution against exaggerated claims, pointing to high public costs and the displacement of regular tourists. However, this literature has predominantly focused on massive, singular events. The impact of regular, smaller-scale international tours or annual domestic leagues, as is the case in cricket, is a different phenomenon. These events may generate a more sustained and predictable stream of tourists—including fans, media, and officials—leading to a more stable impact on the local hospitality, transport, and retail sectors. This paper investigates

how the increasing frequency of international women's cricket tours and the establishment of leagues are being integrated into national tourism strategies.

By Nikolaou et al., (2023), the third relevant area of literature is the relationship between sport and employment. The most visible form of employment in sport is that of the professional athlete. However, the sports industry is a complex ecosystem that supports a vast array of jobs, including coaches, trainers, physiotherapists, administrators, marketing managers, broadcasters, journalists, and event management staff. (Duignan et al., 2022), states that the professionalization of a sport directly leads to the growth of this ecosystem. In the context of developing countries, where female labor force participation can be low, the creation of a new, high-visibility professional sector for women can have a powerful signaling effect, in addition to its direct employment impact. This study explores the formalization of employment in women's cricket, moving from amateur or semi-professional status to fully contracted employment, and maps the ancillary job creation that follows this professionalization.

As per (Rozhda and Sheresheva, 2021), synthesizing these three streams, this paper develops a conceptual framework to analyze the economic impact of women's cricket. This framework posits that direct investment (from boards, sponsors, and media) into the sport initiates a virtuous cycle. This investment professionalizes the athletic talent pool, which improves the quality of the on-field product. A higher-quality product attracts larger audiences, both live and broadcast, which in turn increases the value of media rights and makes the sport a more attractive platform for corporate sponsorship. This enhanced revenue allows for further investment, creating a self-sustaining growth model. The secondary effects of this cycle are the attraction of sports-related tourism and the creation of a specialized labor market around the sport. This framework guides the analysis of the four case study nations.

3. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research objectives, this study employs a qualitative, comparative case study approach. This methodology is particularly well-suited for exploring complex, contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. The economic impact of women's cricket is not an isolated variable but is deeply embedded in the social, cultural, and political fabric of each nation. A qualitative approach allows for a rich, nuanced exploration of these interconnections, which a purely quantitative study might miss (Neumann et al., 2024).

The selection of the four case study countries—India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka—is purposive. These nations were chosen based on several criteria. Firstly, these countries represent the epicenter of global cricket fervor, along with participation and as such provide the cultural

significance of the game within their respective societies. Secondly, they are all developing economies at varying stages of inclusion of women's cricket into their mainstream sport(s) commercial structure allowing a broad range for contrast effect (Mishra and Dey, 2022). This was taken into consideration to create a holistic and multi-dimensional view of the economic environment of each country. The sources were:

1. Official Reports and Publications:

This financial and/or strategic data is more pragmatic than public data. For the annual reports, the footnotes were reviewed to investigate what and how each investment was put to use to impact in women's game and to provide a numeric baseline of the investment (Taherdoost, 2023). There is no debating this matter, the financial, and maybe commercial strategies; however, financial data subjected to other reasonable sources data base provided immense transparency about the financial anchors and strategic picture behind the funds consumption for cricket in each of the countries (Stapley et al., 2022).

2. Market Research and Industry Reports:

To complement the inside-out view of the cricket boards, this study used an abundance of reports from independent sport marketing agencies, financial agencies, and market research companies (Ghanad, 2023). These external documents are crucial for providing an objective, market-based valuation and analysis of women's cricket as a commercial property. While a cricket board's report might state the value of a sponsorship deal, an industry report analyzes the deal's return on investment (ROI), its market-rate value compared to other sports properties, and the underlying audience data that justifies the corporate expenditure. These reports were a primary source for data on broadcast rights valuations, offering detailed analyses of television viewership numbers, streaming figures, and audience demographics (Pyo et al., 2023). Understanding the age, gender, and purchasing power of the audience for women's cricket is fundamental to explaining its appeal to sponsors and advertisers. Furthermore, these reports often contain forward-looking projections and trend analyses that are vital for assessing the future economic potential of the sport. By providing a third-party, data-driven assessment, these documents help to validate or challenge the official narratives presented by the governing bodies, thereby ensuring a more balanced and critical analysis of the true commercial health and potential of women's cricket in the region.

3. Media Archives:

A comprehensive and longitudinal analysis of archival media (news articles, press releases, feature articles, and opinion editorials from quality, national and international media sources) informed the context and narrative of the study. Although official reports convey a static, year-

end, report, media articles provide a fluid, real-time report of the dynamic economy of women's cricket (Bouncken, et al, 2021). Beyond the undertaking of ontological (fact-based) research, analyzing the media discourse was an important methodological contribution (Pappas and Woodside, 2021). The framing of women's cricket - as it moved from a tenuous hobby to credible professional sport - manifested relevant cultural, and thus economic value. Press releases of corporate sponsors were examined to understand the marketing objectives they sought to accomplish with their relationship to the sport. This source is of singularity in identifying the qualitative element of economic impact, such as the brand value of individual female athletes and the overall theme of empowerment and professionalism making the sport an attractive platform for corporate sponsorship.

4. Government and Tourism Board Publications:

The fourth and final type of documents reviewed corresponds to the tourism economy, or the impact of women's cricket on the national tourism economy. The documents reviewed consisted of official publications and promotional materials from national tourism organizations and ministries of government. Included were annual reports from ministries of tourism, brochures and digital content produced for international expos and conferences, and the official social media campaigns from national tourism boards. The intent was to find a reference of women's cricket events or players utilized as assets in destination marketing strategies (Vila-Henninger et al., 2024). The presence of this content can be considered as evidence of an intentional policy to utilize women's cricket for the benefit of economic objectives beyond the sport industry. For instance, a promotional video from a national tourism authority, with a visiting international women's team visiting local highlights, is a straightforward example of this link (Mulisa, 2022). This corpus is important for supporting the argument that hosting women's cricket is not only a sporting endeavor, but is becoming part of the national economy and "soft power" development strategy, particularly in countries such as Sri Lanka where tourism is a vital component of their economy. This type of data enables analysis to move beyond conjecture and demonstrate theory in practice by following revenues generated from the sporting event to the state tourism promotion capacity.

The data analysis was conducted through a process of thematic coding and synthesis. The collected data was systematically organized and coded according to the three core themes of the research: (1) impact on the sports industry, (2) impact on tourism, and (3) impact on employment. Within each case study, the data was analyzed to build a detailed narrative of the economic evolution of women's cricket. Following the individual case analyses, a cross-case synthesis was performed. This involved comparing and contrasting the findings across the four countries to identify overarching patterns, key differences in strategy and outcomes, and the

factors that contribute to these variations. This comparative dimension is crucial for generating insights that are transferable and relevant beyond a single national context.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The analysis of the four nations reveals a clear and consistent trend: where investment flows into women's cricket, tangible economic returns follow. However, the scale, nature, and primary beneficiaries of this economic impact vary significantly, reflecting each country's unique economic structure, policy priorities, and stage of development in the sport.

4.1 India: The Commercial Juggernaut

India is somewhat of an anomaly to the trend in women's cricket as it started and sustained a truly market-based economic model that is now starting to rival traditional men's leagues in the market economy.

Impact on the Sports Industry:

Most importantly the main economic driver is the launch and stunning success of the Women's Premier League (WPL). The franchise based league fundamentally altered the economic model overall. There is a very large amount of start up capital from the purchase of each of the five franchises and the media rights bid, which demonstrates strong market confidence. Capital is demonstrated and almost produced here, through a strong multiplier effect. First, it has generated a remarkable increase in salary for players, for both top performing international players and domestic players, allowing cricket to transition to a full-time job for hundreds of women (Johnson et al., 2022). We would accelerate the stream of revenue sources across the Indian cricket landscape, largely as the majority of money was still related to men's cricket (or men). Corporate sponsorship, then developed into something more than an exercise in marketing in a pay-for visibility exchange. They illustrate the complex and bi-directional momentum between the current corporate strategy and the cultural elevation of female athletes (Wolfe, 2024).

Corporate sponsorship has different layers of meaning. In other words, organizations are tapping into a deep, growing cultural force. The women's cricket lens evokes the clever, disruptive, barrier breaking, and action oriented social and historical problem. Certainly, it is a narrative around authentic resilience - and is ripe for some brands to leverage as the backdrop for purpose led marketing - branded purpose-led not just a producer of product, but a change agent for "equality" and "ambition" (Carlini et al., 2024). Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) in essence know women and household deciders (no-brainer pact). The FMCG pact, is a more lasting bond than a marketing "touchpoint." For corporate brand sponsor's aligned/associated with technology and financial or para limbic sponsors specifically (that characterize their brand

with the WPL brand sponsorship) it means that brands reflect attributes of “newness” “modernity” and “independence.” It is a systematic and strategic effort to finding says-the-audience (future provides) where by the emphasis to women in sports, these women athletes , women athletes are weighted to this pact. Further the WPL deal encompasses the increasing relevance of corporate scan (sharing), for E-ir of brands free use (ESG) (Delignan et al., 2023).

From an industry perspective, the diversification of revenue is perhaps the most crucial economic outcome. The Indian cricket economy, for all its immense success, was characterized by a high degree of concentration risk. Its financial health was overwhelmingly tethered to the commercial performance of the men's national team and, more significantly, the Indian Premier League (IPL). While phenomenally profitable, this over-reliance on a single property created a systemic vulnerability (Stavros et al., 2022). The WPL fundamentally alters this structure by introducing a second, independent, and high-growth revenue pillar.

This new property does not simply cannibalize the existing sponsorship market; it expands it. The WPL attracts a portfolio of brands that may have found the entry-point for the men's IPL to be prohibitively expensive or not perfectly aligned with their target demographic. It offers a new platform with a different set of associations, allowing for more tailored and nuanced marketing campaigns. This creation of a new, parallel market strengthens the entire ecosystem (Houlihan, 2022). The revenue generated from WPL franchise sales, media rights, and sponsorships is a fresh injection of capital that can be reinvested into grassroots development for girls, infrastructure improvement, and player welfare, creating a virtuous cycle of growth.

Impact on Tourism: While direct "cricket tourism" for the WPL is still an emerging concept, the impact is felt through domestic travel. Hosting matches in major metropolitan centers like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru stimulates local economies. Visiting teams, officials, broadcast crews, and a growing number of traveling fans utilize local hotels, restaurants, and transportation services (Sturm et al., 2025). The high production value and broadcast reach of the league also serve as a form of destination marketing, showcasing modern, vibrant Indian cities to a global audience. The potential for attracting international fan groups for future seasons is substantial, representing a significant untapped tourism market.

Impact on Employment: The WPL and the overall professionalization of women's cricket have been a major source of employment creation. Beyond the players, a whole new professional cadre has been established (Pittz et al., 2021). This includes specialized coaching staff (head coaches, batting coaches, bowling coaches), sports science and medical personnel (physiotherapists, strength and conditioning experts), and team management (analysts, operations managers). The media and broadcasting sector has also expanded, with a growing demand for female commentators, presenters, and journalists who can provide authentic and expert coverage

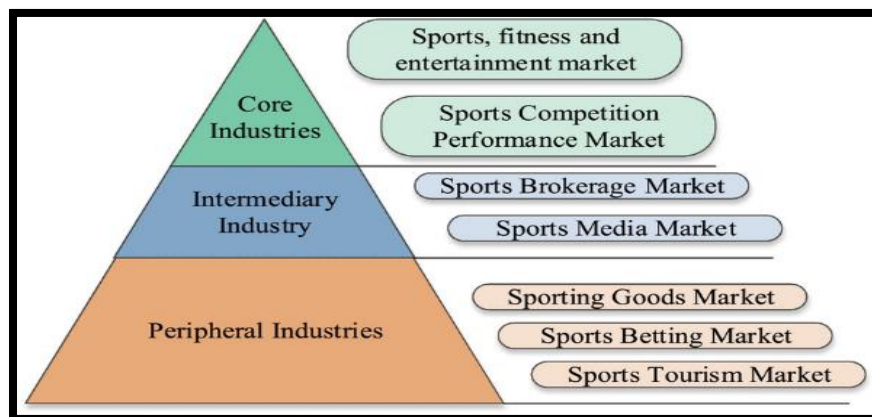
of the women's game. This creates a clear career path in the sports industry for women, both on and off the field.

4.2 Pakistan: Building a Professional Foundation

In Pakistan, the economic impact of women's cricket is being driven more by top-down, strategic investment from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) rather than a market-led explosion. The focus has been on building the fundamental structures of a professional sport.

Impact on the Sports Industry: The PCB has made significant strides in formalizing the financial landscape for its female cricketers. The introduction of tiered central contracts has been pivotal, providing players with a stable monthly income and performance-based incentives. This financial security allows them to focus exclusively on their athletic careers. Concurrently, the PCB has been successful in attracting dedicated sponsors for the women's team, separate from the men's team sponsorships (Chauhan and Pal, 2022). This is a crucial step, as it establishes women's cricket as a distinct commercial property with its own value proposition. Furthermore, increasing the number of domestic tournaments and investing in media coverage for these matches is slowly building a more robust internal market for the women's game.

Figure 3: Classification-of-the-sports-industry



Source: researchgate.net,2025

Impact on Tourism: The primary tourism impact in Pakistan is linked to the successful hosting of international teams. Every inbound tour from countries like South Africa, England, or the West Indies brings a delegation of players, support staff, and media (Brown, 2023). Their presence generates revenue for the high-security hotels and transportation services required. More importantly, the safe and successful completion of these tours serves as powerful public

relations, challenging negative international perceptions and showcasing the country's capability to host international events, which can have a positive spillover effect on broader tourism.

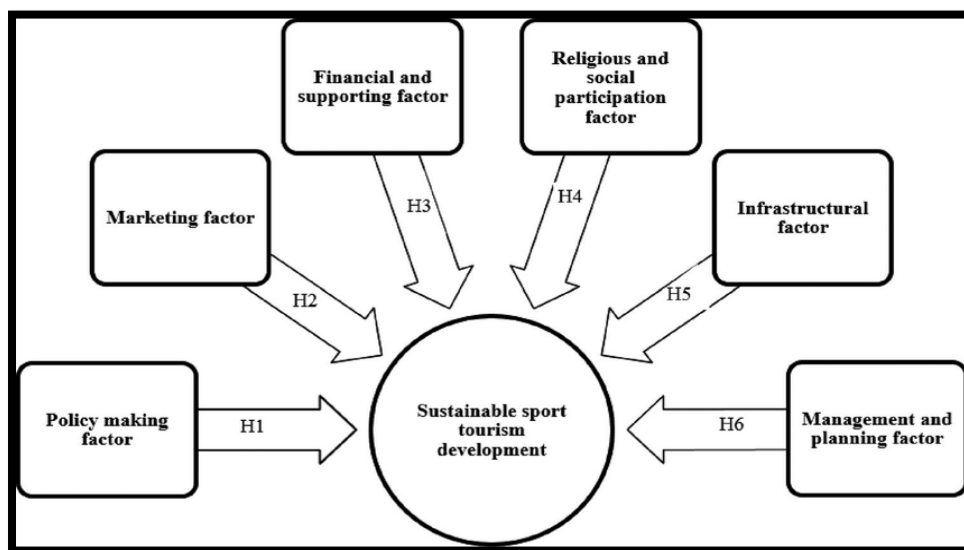
Impact on Employment: The formalization of player contracts is the most direct employment impact. This move from ad-hoc match fees to salaried employment is a significant economic advancement for the athletes (Johnson et al., 2022). The PCB has also invested in developing female coaches, umpires, and match officials, creating new professional roles within the cricket administration. As the domestic structure grows, the demand for these roles at the regional and city level is expected to increase, creating a grassroots employment network.

4.3 Sri Lanka: Cricket as a Tourism Ambassador

Sri Lanka has uniquely and strategically positioned women's cricket as a component of its national tourism promotion strategy, leveraging the sport to enhance its brand image.

Impact on the Sports Industry: Like other boards, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has professionalized its structure by introducing player contracts and increasing match fees for its female players. The board has also been successful in securing corporate sponsorships, which are vital for funding the women's program (Sarma and Goswami, 2023). The hosting of a women's franchise T20 league, though on a smaller scale than India's WPL, represents a significant step towards creating a commercially viable domestic product that can attract both local and international talent and investment.

Figure 4: Conceptual-model-of-sustainable-sports-tourism



Source: researchgate.net,2025

Impact on Tourism: This is where Sri Lanka's model stands out. The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau has actively collaborated with SLC during inbound tours. Visiting teams are often taken on sponsored excursions to major tourist sites, and these activities are heavily promoted on social media and through international media channels (Khan, 2025). This creates authentic and engaging promotional content, using the high profile of international athletes to showcase Sri Lanka's attractions, from its beaches to its cultural heritage sites. This direct integration of sport and tourism marketing is a cost-effective way to reach a global audience and drive tourist arrivals.

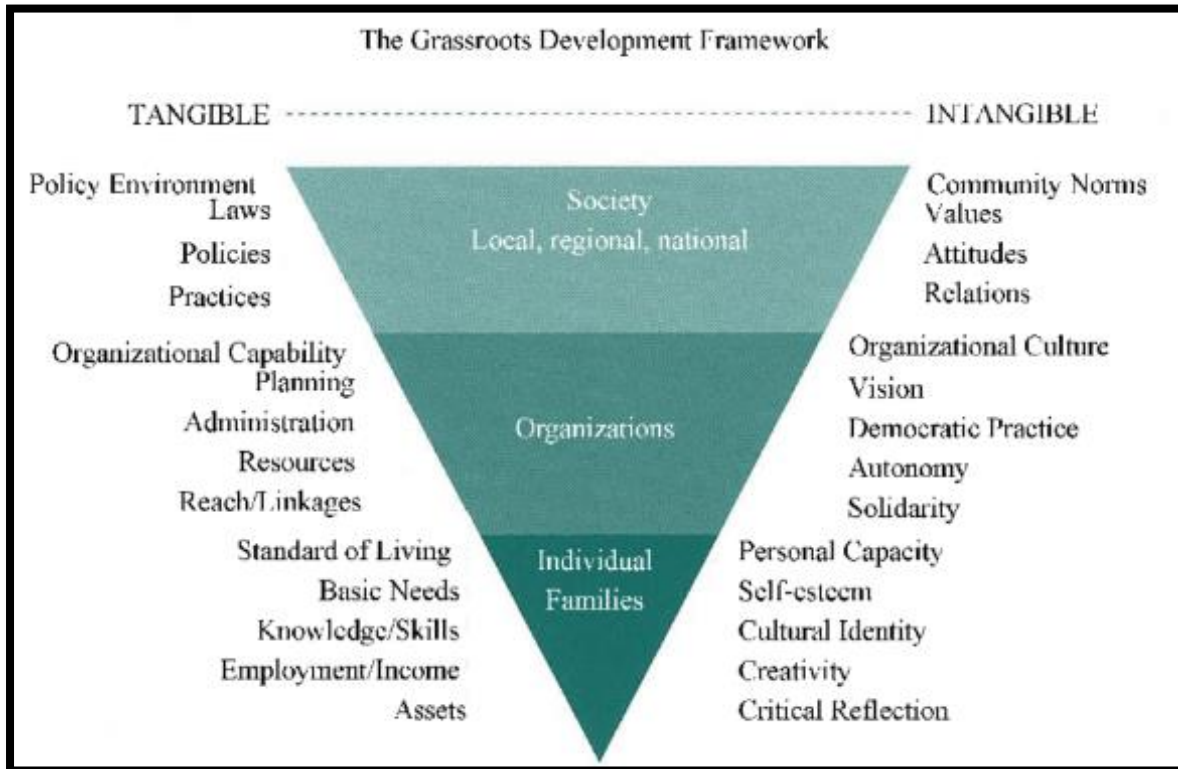
Impact on Employment: The primary employment impact is centered on the players and the immediate support staff. The development of a domestic league, even a modest one, creates seasonal employment for a wider pool of players and coaches. Furthermore, the intersection with tourism creates ancillary employment in the hospitality and tour guide sectors during international series (Brice et al., 2022). The success of this model could lead to more specialized roles in sports tourism management and marketing within both the cricket board and the national tourism authority.

4.4 Bangladesh: Grassroots Growth and Social Empowerment

In Bangladesh, the economic impact of women's cricket is closely tied to the on-field success of the national team and the resulting rise in its public profile. The growth is steady and driven by a combination of board investment and growing public interest.

Impact on the Sports Industry: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has significantly increased the salaries and benefits for its centrally contracted female players, recognizing their international achievements. The board has also secured new and more lucrative sponsorship deals for the women's team, reflecting their increased marketability. While a franchise league has not yet been established, the BCB has invested in improving the quality and frequency of domestic competitions (Qin, 2023). The broadcast of women's international matches is becoming more regular, which is a critical step in building an audience and attracting media rights revenue in the future.

Figure 5: The-Grassroots-Development-Framework



Source: researchgate.net,2025

Impact on Tourism: The tourism impact in Bangladesh is currently the least developed among the four nations. It is largely confined to the direct spending by visiting international teams. However, the national team's success, particularly in multi-team tournaments, raises the country's international profile (Maldonado-Villalpando and Paneque-Gálvez, 2022). Hosting more frequent tri-series or regional tournaments could be a viable strategy to begin building a sports tourism niche, attracting spectators from neighboring cricket-loving nations.

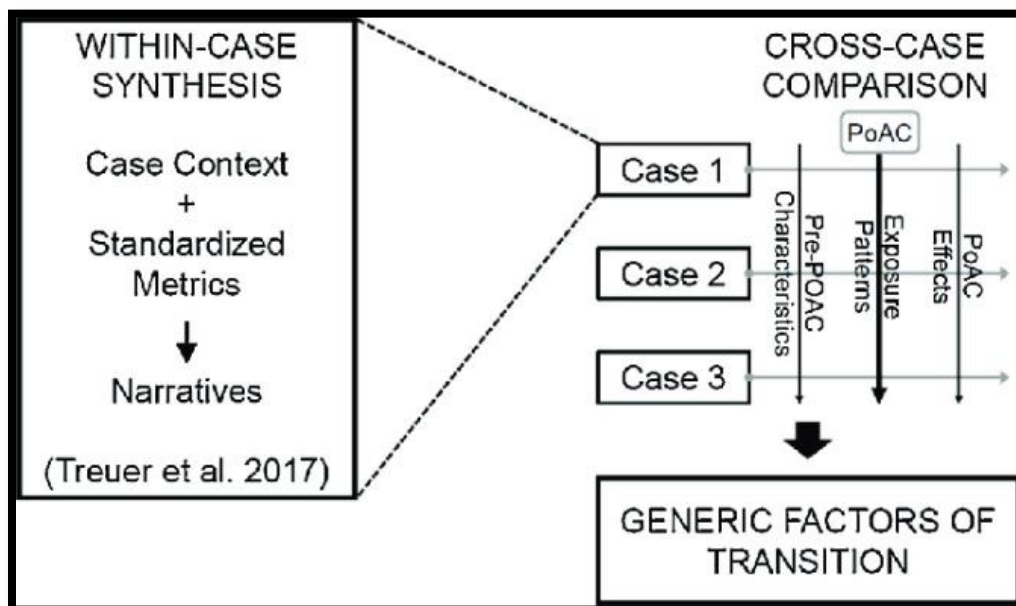
Impact on Employment: The expansion of the central contract list by the BCB is the most significant direct employment outcome. For many of the players, who come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, a professional cricket contract represents a powerful tool of financial independence and social mobility (Afandi et al., 2024). The BCB is also investing in creating a pipeline of female coaches and support staff, ensuring the sustainability of the sport's development and creating career opportunities for former players. The social impact of these visible, successful female professionals is immense, inspiring a new generation and subtly shifting gender norms around women's participation in the workforce.

5. CROSS-CASE SYNTHESIS AND IMPLICATIONS

Comparing the four nations reveals a clear development trajectory for the economics of women's cricket. The foundational step, common to all four, is investment by the national governing body in professionalizing the players through central contracts. This provides the stability necessary for athletic development. The next stage involves securing dedicated corporate sponsorships and broadcast deals, which establishes women's cricket as a viable commercial entity (Milne-Ives et al., 2025). The most advanced, final stage of evolution and where India is currently the only nation is developing a high-value domestic franchise league - an economic engine for all revenue streams.

The Indian experience provides the most incredible opportunities that exist, if properly catalyzed by market forces. It showed the significance of having a large ready-made domestic market and wealth effect of expansion of such market. For Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, a more managed governance, incremental broadening developmental pathway is likely more enduring (Mantravadi et al, 2023). The Sri Lanka model, that of continuously more correctly defining women's cricket with national tourism product outcomes is a good practice model to leverage, monetize, and then be able to do it again in a more rapid succession in the future.

Figure 6: Cross-Case Synthesis and Implications



Source: researchgate.net,2025)

The effects will reverberate through multi-million economies. From a policy maker's perspective, ethically, we should be sustainably managing even the finite resources, but as an investment marker, women's sport provides strategy-wise sound and financially worthwhile investments that I think would yield community industry economic development, overall economics, businesses, sustainability, tourism and jobs (Sajdak and Młody, 2024).

6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The injection of investment into the sport is generating a virtuous circle of professionalizing, monetizing, and popularizing the sport that results in real economic benefits. The benefits are evident in the actual growing value of the sport industry, as new revenue is generated through broadcaster rights, sponsorships, and franchises selling. The benefits are also evident, with that fledgling but aspirational impact on domestic and international tourism, as well as the creation of relationships and a new portfolio of jobs for women, in a space that women were excluded from previously.

The trajectory of growth is not uniform. India's market-driven WPL has set a new global benchmark, while Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh are pursuing strategic, board-led models that are progressively building the commercial and professional foundations of the sport. Each model offers valuable lessons, highlighting the importance of tailored strategies that align with national economic contexts and priorities.

This research, being qualitative and based on secondary data, provides a foundational overview. It establishes the clear presence and mechanisms of economic impact. However, it also highlights areas where further research is urgently needed. There is a pressing need for quantitative studies to precisely measure the economic multiplier effect of investment in women's cricket. Econometric analyses could quantify the exact contribution to GDP, the number of jobs created (both direct and indirect), and the specific return on investment from hosting women's international matches in terms of tourist spending. Longitudinal studies that track the financial growth of leagues like the WPL and the careers of female athletes would also provide invaluable data.

Furthermore, future research could explore the socio-economic impact on the athletes themselves, examining how professional contracts contribute to financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and empowerment within their communities. In conclusion, women's cricket in South Asia is no longer just a story of sporting prowess; it is a compelling narrative of economic development and a powerful testament to the financial potential that is unlocked when investment is made in women's sport. The game is changing, both on and off the field, and its economic innings has only just begun.

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