

# Stakeholder Relationship Management in Online Business and Competitive Value Propositions: Evidence from the Sports Industry

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## ABSTRACT

In one hand, marketers have privileges to obtain additional information about their target markets through the online businesses. On the other hand, customers and other stakeholders have an enormous flow of information to compare between competitive value propositions, available in the market. In this market competition, understanding the customers' and other stakeholders' value anticipations would be a central success factor for marketers to prolifically develop competitive value propositions, based on understanding the customers' and other stakeholders' needs, wants and expectations. Stakeholder relationship marketing has a history, as well as further potentials to understand stakeholders' value anticipations. From this context and based on an inductive constructivist approach, this study develops insights and proposes a conceptual framework on how various sports organizations manage their stakeholder relationships through their online business platforms, in order to design and deliver competitive value propositions.

## KEYWORDS

Competitive Advantage, Online Business, Relationship Marketing, Sports Marketing, Stakeholder Relationship Management, Value

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary marketplaces, in one hand, we have the traditional markets, such as the traditional shops, where buyer and sellers interact face-to-face. On the other hand, it is more than two decades, because of the enormous progress of the digital economy; we have the privilege to supplement the traditional shops through various online business platforms. However, buyer and seller do not interact in person in such online business platforms; in general, there is a similar or even more intense competition in the contemporary online shops, compared to the traditional shops, because of the extensive information flow between various stakeholders. In order to survive and prosper, in both of the traditional and the contemporary online business platforms, marketers need to offer competitive value propositions that could outplay the other available competitive value propositions in the market places. A proactive stakeholder relationship management process and understanding stakeholders', including customers' value anticipations through such processes would be a central success factor to prolifically develop superior value that could outplay the competitive value propositions, available in the marketplaces. The cause and consequence of stakeholder relationships and interactions as stakeholder causal scopes (SCSs) are crucial antecedents to understand stakeholder's value anticipations through analysing their needs, wants and expectations (Shams, 2015a). Therefore, the

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product and service value that would be developed, based on such understandings of stakeholders' value anticipations is instrumental to design, offer and monitor competitive value propositions in the contemporary market places (Evangalista et al., 2015; Shams, 2013a).

In order to recognise stakeholders' value anticipations through SCSs, relationship marketing (RM) plays a significant role in the competitive marketing strategies by establishing, maintaining, enhancing, and modifying relationships with customers and other stakeholders (Kaufmann and Shams, 2015a; Shams, 2013b). Such a RM centred stakeholder relationship management attempts to create value for customers and profit for organization by a series of relational exchanges that have both a history and a future. Relational exchanges can be viewed under transaction cost analysis and social exchange theories depending on the business contexts (Kanagal, 2009). Again, Gingrande (2001) described that RM is identical to competitive advantage in the marketplaces. Furthermore, from the online business perspectives, stakeholder relationship centred initiatives create a richer, more consistent, more usable, and happier experience for customers that help customers to conveniently get more information out of their experience (Trequattrini et al., 2016).

By anticipating customers' needs, a RM approach makes them feel special or known (Shams, 2011a). The power of RM provides a competitive advantage by personalizing marketing campaigns in the online business platforms (Gingrande, 2001). With the rise of internet, internet marketing has become a critical issue to reach target market and strike business competitiveness. "The internet marketing becomes a hot and new marketing channel to sell and buy through internet meanwhile changes buyer behaviour" (Wang, Chen and Chan, 2004, p. 85), compared to the buyers of traditional marketplace. Therefore, a proposition is developed that the RM centred value schemes ensure value optimisation in the contemporary online business platforms for all involved stakeholders, including customers through understanding customers' and other stakeholders' needs. From this perspective, this study focuses on the influence of RM, in order to understand how RM could help marketers to proactively manage their stakeholder relationships, with an attempt to design, deliver and evaluate competitive value propositions through internet marketing. Since, the "existing literature and practice suggest RM is the best way to gain competitive advantage" (Little and Marandi, 2003, p. 33), where RM helps to gain competitive advantage sustainably (Donaldson and O'Toole, 2007; Kurtz, 2009; Shams and Lombardi, 2016).

Based on the discussion thus far, this study attempts to analyse the online value propositions of various organizations from the sports industry that have been experiencing a steady growth in their businesses. The aim here is to understand how these sports organizations have been exploiting their SCSs through their online business platforms to design and deliver competitive product and service value to their target markets.

## **DESIGN/METHOD/APPROACH OF THE STUDY**

To pursue the aim of this study, this paper is developed, based on the typical inductive constructivist methodology, with an aim to support the analysis, so that the additional understandings can be evolved cogently from the discussed issues and contexts from the relevant business literature and industry data (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994). From this context, alongside the early discussion on the relevant business literature in the introduction section, this paper also argues, based on presenting the additional relevant business literature and industry data along the progress of the discussions, as an inductive approach, to authenticate the arguments, with reference to the aim of the study (Hallier and Forbes, 2004; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Shams, 2016). The arguments of the paper draw attention to the internet marketing practices of five grown (Shams, 2011b; 2011c) sports organizations, where the organizations have been utilizing various RM perspectives (which are standardized as RM indicators), in order to manage their stakeholder relationships and to design, deliver and monitor superior competitive products/services value to their target markets through the online business platforms. The discussed organizations are:

- Arsenal Football Club of the English Premier League;
- Cricket Australia (CA);
- England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB);
- Hawthorn Football Club of Australian Rules Football and
- Indian Premier League (IPL).

The recognized RM indicators are (Shams, 2012a; 2012b; 2011; Gide and Shams 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2011d; 2011e):

- Orientation on benefits or knowledgeable Customers;
- Proving advantage through customer's experience;
- Innovative offering;
- Joint power;
- Customization;
- Relationship factor focused branding;
- Cherishing Barren Meadow (CBM);
- Relationship and service values instead of bureaucratic legal values;
- Adaptation;
- High stakeholder service, stakeholder commitment and stakeholder contact;
- Understanding customer and other stakeholders' contemporary and latent needs;
- Long-time scale, life-time value and client retention;
- Customer share instead of market share;
- Quality is the concern of all and
- Share of dependency, risk and uncertainty

“Since a discussion on the relevant terms and definitions is often useful to contribute to literature” (Shams, 2015b, p. 2); the following section attempts to discuss and define the key terms, relevant to this study.

## **KEY TERMS AND DEFENITIONS**

### **Online Business Platforms**

Combination of internet and other digital and automated resources (e.g. intranet, ATM of the banking service providers and so forth) to promote and offer products and services, as a supplement of the traditional marketplace (Shams, 2013c, p. 38).

### **Internet Marketing**

Marketing activities directed through the internet communication medium in order to cost effectively reach wider range of target market (Shams, 2013c, p. 38).

### **Relationship Marketing**

Administering marketing activities with a long-term outlook, underlying the mutually beneficial relationship values and multifarious goals of associated stakeholders, while the stakeholders working interdependently in order to establish, maintain and enhance value for customers by meeting and exceeding customers' anticipation in a way that customers expect and accept, and share that value with the involved stakeholders towards a win-win outcome (Shams, 2012a, p. 244; 2012b, p. 262).

## **Relationship Marketing Indicator**

Various relationship marketing perspectives that could be utilized to establish, maintain and enhance alternative routes for marketing in association with the key stakeholders in order to sustainably have the benefit of relational approach of delivering mutually beneficial value (Shams, 2012a, p. 244; 2012b, pp. 262-263).

## **Competitive Advantage**

RM centred competitive advantage can be defined as a distinct reason of supremacy of any product, service, organization, brand, trademark, person or any other market offering or entity that offers superior value for the target market in association with all involved stakeholders, comparing to any other existing or emerging substitute offering, as well as share that value with the associated stakeholders, with a long-term outlook, potentially for life-time (Shams, 2012a, p. 244).

## **Value**

Value is perceived as anticipated outcome of any sort of planned and organized activities. The activities could be derived from monetary, psychic or physical resources. The more the outcome meets initial anticipation, more the possibility of win-win outcomes or value optimization for all involved stakeholders (Shams, 2012a, p. 244; 2012b 263).

## **ONLINE BUSINESSES, STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE THROUGH SUPERIOR VALUE PROPOSITIONS**

An organization could utilize these RM perspectives that are standardized as RM indicators to proffer market offering and promotion through online business platforms, in order to attain and retain competitive advantage. Underlying the coherent context of this article, this section attempts to develop insights, based on the fifteen RM indicators. The discussions of various sub-sections of this section follow the evaluative criteria:

- Academic significance of the RM indicator;
- Description of an internet (online) based market offering or promotion, and relevance with the RM indicator;
- Significance of the RM indicator in order to attain and retain competitive advantage through the value propositions of the described market offering or promotion.

## **Innovative Offering**

Based on the interaction of various stakeholders including customers, and understanding of market trends, RM helps to proffer innovative offerings from the opportunity identification phase to the design phase, product testing phase, product marketing phase and even product life-cycle management phase. Donaldson and O'Toole (2007) clarified that underlying the interaction of user (customer) in network, a relational marketing approach impact upon innovative product development process. Strategic market relationship can influence the innovation and product or service development process. Donaldson and O'Toole (2007) also added that a RM approach can offer new and existing ways to develop products and services and can find out alternative routes for marketing. Correspondingly through the interaction of customer in network and the influence of strategic market relationship, Hawthorn has developed an innovative offering for their online store. Hawthorn is operating an online supermarket known as Hawksnest (2010). The Hawksnest's online gift voucher emerges as an innovative offering as a RM practice rather than other products of Hawksnest, where customers can send a gift voucher of a certain amount to their desired ones and those desired ones as a third

person can buy that certain amount (the amount of the gift voucher) products and services as per their own choice from Hawksnest only. Such an innovative relationship building and enhancing RM practice extends the prospect of more traffic in Hawksnest, which allows the opportunity of further instant and or future selling propositions for Hawksnest. Since, the customer who is buying the gift voucher may buy something for herself or himself too from Hawksnest during her or his visit or may buy something for herself or himself in future, as well as, the same thing may happen to the third person, who visits Hawksnest after receiving the gift voucher. Therefore, Hawthorn is able to have the benefit of prospective competitive advantage on the following areas:

- Prospective customers (gift voucher receiver and sender, who visits the Hawknest only for the transaction of the gift voucher and may not have any intention to buy anything else) may buy something for themselves instantly from the Hawknest that they had the intention to buy from somewhere else, or that they may not had any plan to buy;
- Prospective customers (gift voucher receiver and sender) may find some idea to buy something in future, while they visit Hawknest for the gift voucher purpose. In this case, Hawknest at least receives the advantage of staying in the prospective customer's mind and may have received further consideration from the prospective customer, when they think to buy in future;
- Moreover, Hawknest may have the privilege to seek such an advantage in other way around. For example, prospective customers who visit Hawknest to buy something else or to search for information, may like the idea of the gift voucher to buy;
- If any prospective customers (who comes to buy something else or to search for information, and has not any previous experience of the Hawknest gift voucher) feel any interest about the gift voucher, Hawknest would be able to engage the prospective customers on their website for a little more time, instead of let them not to browse other competitive websites for that extra time.

### **Orientation on Benefits or Knowledgeable Customers and Proving Advantage through Customer's Experience**

In this sub-section two RM indicators are described concurrently based on the events promotion of the Arsenal. A positive attitude is estimated as part of the relationship process. The relationship should be significant through customer's or other stakeholder's sufficient knowledge about the company or about the offering (Gummesson, 2002). Furthermore, Rajaobelina and Bergeron (2009) described that client knowledge is favourably related to relationship excellence. Consequently, RM signifies on stakeholder's orientation on benefits about the business with the company. Moreover, RM assists to show the advantages of using company's products or services rather than the competitive offerings through customer or other stakeholder's experience about company's products and services. Kurtz (2009) described:

*Recent Relationship Marketing efforts are focusing on turning customer from passive partners into active proponents of a product. Through viral marketing, firm let satisfied customers get the word about products out to other consumers-like a spreading virus. Again, Buzz marketing relies on influencers or early adopters of products to talk about their experiences with their friend and colleagues (as cited in Shams, 2012a, p. 220).*

Accordingly, Arsenal offers a broad range of event services from product launching to meetings and conferences, exhibitions, banqueting, special events, wedding, film and photography, annual events and legend tours (Meetings and Events, 2009) in their home ground, the Emirates Stadium. The web-based promotion of Arsenal's event offerings illustrates:

*Emirates Stadium proved to be a superb choice of venue in which to host our annual Customer Exposition and, as with Arsenal, a genuine 'crowd-puller'. The facilities were ideal, the staff were professional and helpful throughout and, most importantly of all, delegate and exhibitor feedback following the event confirmed we had made the right choice-Mark Penny, Vendor Marketing Business Manager, Dixons Store Group (Exhibitions, 2009, as cited in Shams, 2012a, p. 220).*

Therefore, Arsenal endeavours to augment competitive advantage of their event offerings, by placing their current and loyal customers at the front of their web-based promotional campaigns, where the loyal customer acts as an advocate of Arsenal's events. Through such a relationship enhancing exercise with the existing customer, Arsenal retains them, as well as, attracts new customers. Therefore, the orientation on benefits or knowledgeable customers and proving advantage through customer's experience as RM indicators are seen in Arsenal's RM practice, as the existing customers are well aware about Arsenal's event services. Therefore, the existing customers advocate for Arsenal, as well as, Arsenal is able to prove their distinct advantage through their customer's experience. Through such a web-based promotion and subsequent competitive advantage, Arsenal and their existing customer both are contributing and experiencing mutually beneficial value, while Arsenal is able to further promote their event offerings to the wider range of the target markets, as well as the existing customers are able to obtain competitive service value from Arsenal event offerings.

### **Relationship Factor Focused Branding**

Lars and Berggren (2010) stated that the different extents of relationship aspects between company and customers and other stakeholders can enhance brand loyalty. Based on close strategic RM and being more active in the relationship, companies could create more satisfied and loyal customers by enhancing brand loyalty. Relationship strategies help to build corporate brand image too (Lars and Berggren, 2010; Shams, 2015c). Focusing on important aspects of the relationship with the customers, companies can achieve customer loyalty and a sustainable brand image. Again, Andersen (2005) described that one of the key aspects of RM is communication with customers. Involving consumers in a marketing communication process is a prerequisite for achieving brand involvement and loyalty, which, in turn, affects the prospects of establishing positive market relationships. From this perspective, Arsenal develops relationship factor focused merchandising brands by utilizing the relational affection of their target market. Arsenal has introduced 'N5' as a brand and offers various 'N5' merchandises through their online shop (Arsenal Products, 2009). Actually, "N5 is a tiny postcode of London. In the north-western corner of N5 is Arsenal football ground. It is one of the country's most recognisable grounds, and not just by virtue of the side's success" (London N5 Guidebook, 2008, np).

Arsenal players and fans have an associated life-long emotion, feeling and nostalgia with Arsenal, its stadium and the club's location, the N5. Jack Staniforth, a footballer, who represented his country in the decade of 1960, has expressed his emotion about N5 and Arsenal when he was invited from Fulham, another football club of the English Premier League for a trial instead of Arsenal as, "when I invited to trial with Fulham in 1957 pre-season, I would not realise me, which is just as well because my heart was in N5... Yes Arsenal is much more than a football club to me" (Staniforth, 2009, np). In the same way, Arsenal fans have similar feeling about Arsenal and its entities (British Council, 2011). Significantly, Arsenal uses these emotions and feelings of Arsenal's players and fans to create the N5 brand for a different range of merchandise to accelerate their sales. As a consequence, relationship factor focused branding is actively associated with Arsenal's RM practice, as Arsenal adapts and introduces the range of N5 brand and offers through their online shop, which is originated from the emotion and feeling of Arsenal's players and fans as a relationship factor. Likewise, CA's online offering Myhero merchandises; Arsenal tries to snatch the competitive advantage over usually available sports products in the market. Since, Arsenal tries to appeal to the target market by converting and

differentiating an ordinary sport product to fairly extra ordinary for their target market, as Arsenal utilizes their club location 'N5' and their target market's relationship value to introduce a brand for sports merchandising.

### **Cherishing Barren Meadow (CBM)**

CBM focused RM practice is found in Hawthorn's online membership services. The term CBM evolves while analysing some of the internet marketing strategies of the analysed sports organizations, where the organizations invested time, money, skills and other efforts even in the market segments, which initially looks financially non-lucrative. However, the organizations invested all of these efforts even in the barren segments of the market in the hope of considerable long-term return of the investment from today's barren segments of the market. In this regard, Kurtz (2009) described that one of the aspects of RM is to have deeper orientation on opportunity evolvment through relationship practice and less orientation on initial financial gain. For example, "a local wine shop may host a wine-tasting reception" (p. 316), where even the shop owner does not expect that all of the guests of the reception will turn into regular loyal customers. Yet, the wine-shop has to entertain even the non-lucrative current customers or potential customers in the hope of gaining long-term customer loyalty. Such an initial CBM oriented RM practice, leads to long-run success.

Consequently, Hawthorn membership services start with signing up to a free online Hawthorn account, known as MyHawks, which provides the information to the subscribers about the latest news and events, special offers, membership information, exclusive merchandising deals and more from Hawthorn and their sponsors and commercial partners (Membership, 2010; MyHawks, 2010). In the Why Join (2010) webpage, Hawthorn describes the benefit of the membership through the comments of existing members, the Club President, the coaches, the captain, the vice-captain and the players. In the Frequently Asked Question (FAQ 2010) webpage, Hawthorn's supporters and other potential members can find the answers to all of their potential questions about Hawthorn membership. MyHawks (2010) online account subscribers receive periodical newsletters about Hawthorn and their partners' latest offerings, special offers, merchandising deals, membership information and so forth. Such a relationship building exercise through CRM focused database marketing (Shams, 2011b) with MyHawks subscription indicates that Hawthorn nurtures even the initially non-lucrative customers to turn them into lucrative customers by selling Hawthorn or their partners' offerings and or Hawthorn's membership. It verifies that CBM is included in Hawthorn's RM practice. Such a CBM focused online membership operation allows Hawthorn to take the advantage of circulating and promoting their messages and offerings through comparatively low cost medium of communication to the wider range of audience that is online, ongoing and on time as well.

### **Joint Power and Customization**

Again, joint power and customization as two different RM indicators are described in this sub-section, underlying one of the offerings of CA's online shop. Power is an underrated thought in the marketing literature. The formation of gargantuan global groups today is a matter of power (Gummeson, 2002), where RM formulates joint power among the stakeholders (Kurtz, 2009), which helps companies to achieve their goals. On the other hand, Kurtz (2009) described that the tendency of customization is higher in RM rather than transactional marketing. Again, Little and Marandi (2003, p. 31) illustrate that "RM service providers gain a better knowledge of the client's requirements and needs. This knowledge can then be combined with social rapport built over a number of service encounters to tailor and customise the service to client's specifications". CA utilizes the joint power of their stakeholders in order to offer customized products through their online shop.

CA is operating an online shop (Cricket Australia, 2008) targeting its fans with a range of core and customized offerings. These include apparel, headwear, ties, stubby holders, DVDs and videos, gift items and Myheroes as customized offering. For apparel, headwear, ties, stubby holders, gift and novelty, fans simply need to place the order online. CA operates the Myheroes in collaboration

with Myheroes Pty Ltd. This is a separate website, linked to the CA's online shop, and allows fans to order online for various customized products. Myheroes offers a diverse range of customized products to fans including personalized Growth Charts for kids, personalized A3 Prints, personalized A4 Prints, personalized Birthday Cards, personalized Special Occasion Cards, personalized Post-e-cards, DVD's and so forth. Here fans can include their gift recipient's name, personalized message, desired hero's (one of the current or former Australian cricketers) action and customized symbol. One of the relational aspects for the gift recipient is the hero sends the gift to the recipient on the special day with the hero's message and autograph (Myheroes, 2008a). On the fan's webpage, recipient can express their expression. "Look at the great card Mathew Hayden sent for my birthday, Joshua, age 8" (Myheroes, 2008b, np). The example of fans' proclamations demonstrates that how Myhero is able to nurture the target market. CA is experiencing the benefit of two RM indicators, customization and joint power, through their online shop. Since, CA customizes their online shop offerings to the market by adding customer or recipient's name, personalized message and autograph of the desired celebrity, as well as CA extends their online shop's offerings through the collaboration of Myhero Pvt Ltd. Such a joint power or effort of CA and Myhero Pvt Ltd. enables them to attain additional market share of the gift items through Myhero offerings. Utilizing the joint power of associated stakeholder, such a customized offering of gift cards allows CA to snatch the competitive advantage over usually available gift cards in the market. Since, CA tries to appeal to the target market by converting and differentiating an ordinary gift card to fairly extra ordinary for their target market, as CA includes personalized message and autograph of the desired cricket celebrity of their customer.

### **Relationship and Service Values instead of Bureaucratic Legal Values and Adaptation**

Gummesson (2002) illustrates RM endorses relationships and services values to the customer rather than bureaucratic-legal values. Again, Gummesson (2002, p. 16) elaborates,

*Bureaucratic-legal values dominate governments and their agencies. Its representatives have previously disclaimed marketing, but the international wave of privatisation, deregulation and demand for competition, as well as the failure of the command economies, has forced a change. RM is a valid concept for public organizations as well, and an understanding of how marketing could be applied to public bodies to the benefit of the consumer/citizen is growing. Unfortunately, bureaucratic-legal values are also common in private companies. RM promotes different values based on relationships and services to the customer.*

Another analysed RM indicator of this sub-section is adaptation. Stakeholder relationship management attempts to simplify the relationships among the associated stakeholders (Kaufmann and Shams, 2015b; Carayannis et al., 2015), which helps marketers to deal with the changing business environment. RM keeps an inquisitive eye on changes so that the organization can timely adapt with any transforming circumstances (Gummesson, 2002) and/or can flourish further opportunity. Accordingly, ECB had launched their Building Partnership campaign, a five year long strategic plan framework (England and Wales Cricket Board, 2009). David Collier (2009), the Chief Executive Officer of ECB explained the goals of the Building Partnership as: ECB needed to adapt a customer-driven organization by reducing bureaucracy. Building Partnership gave clear, focused and measurable targets for ECB and its stakeholders to meet those goals. ECB had set out the following area, where they want to improve in order to adapt with the transforming business requirements (England and Wales Cricket Board, 2009):

- Streamline management;
- Slash paperwork and bureaucracy;
- Improve Accountability;



- Performance management;
- Commercial awareness;
- Efficiency.

ECB wants to develop trust with stakeholders by effective communication, service and reduced bureaucracy; as stakeholders need to know what they can expect from ECB and be sure that ECB will deliver. By end of 2007, ECB established a communication system by which 80% of their communication can be done online to reduce paperwork and bureaucracy (England and Wales Cricket Board, 2009). To achieve the Building Partnership five year long strategic planning's goals, ECB has adapted a more customer focused culture by implementing relationship and service values instead of bureaucratic legal values. ECB's initiative towards an organizational change through the strategic plan framework including the stakeholder management like Building Partnership helps ECB to adapt with the ever-challenging managerial efforts, as ECB prioritizes the type of stakeholders and the importance of individual stakeholder's significance towards their financial and other operational goals, with the aim of a win-win outcome for all associated stakeholders (Shams 2012a; 2012b; England and Wales Cricket Board, 2009). Therefore, comparing the preceding business practice of ECB, such a relationship service centred adaptation of contemporary business requirement through online application facilitates the prospect of gaining further advantage from the concurrent value driven customer focused business practice.

### **Quality is the Concern of All and Share of Dependency, Risk and Uncertainty**

Again, in this sub-section, along-side the RM indicator quality is the concern of all, the share of dependency, risk and uncertainty is described as another RM indicator. "Relationship Marketing commits all employees (and other external stakeholders, such as business partners) to provide high-quality products and services" (Kurtz, 2009, p. 314). Stavros (2005, p. 31) summarizes that in RM, "it is the responsibility of all employees to promote the quality because RM is not just concerned with relationships administered by a marketing department within an organization, but with all departments of an organization". Concurrently, RM also shares the dependency, risk and uncertainty in this ever-changing business environment (Gummesson, 2002). RM bases business interaction on cooperation and trust (Kurtz, 2009).

From these perspectives, IPL establishes a practice (Shams, 2012a), where not only the internal stakeholder of IPL, but also the external stakeholders, such as commercial partners are also conscious about the significance of the quality is the concern of all. Furthermore, IPL shares dependency, risk and uncertainty with their commercial partners. IPL has renewed its 2008's US \$1.026 billion dollar ten year television broadcasting contract with Sony Group's MultiScreen Media (MSM) in 2009 on US \$1.64 billion dollar for the rest of the nine years (Patil, 2009), which covers major rights for television broadcasting for the MSM. Moreover, India's largest media and entertainment conglomerate, the Coleman & Co. (BCCL), has won internet, mobile, radio and some television rights for the IPL for up to 2014 season. The BCCL will pay about \$58 million for the 2011-14 rights (Hiscock, 2011). IPL's broadcast rights contracts are bringing significant revenue, where one of the important aspects of the contracts is linked to the success of the league and to broadcasting rating points (Maurya, 2009). It indicates that such a relationship practice and its success depends on the sharing of dependency, risk and uncertainty among IPL and its broadcasting partners. Also, all parties are concerned with enhancing their performance such as IPL's success and broadcaster's rating point, so that the time of contract and the contracted amount of money will not shrink, which indicates that IPL's RM practice includes the quality is the concern of all RM indicator too. In addition, the contracted amount of money has built a strong lifetime financial value for IPL within the initial years of IPL's operation, where the analysed RM indicators of this sub-section play the key role to build such a financial platform for IPL. As a result, the significant financial platform resulting from the practice of these two RM indicators facilitates to identify, establish, maintain and enhance further competitive advantages for IPL.

## **High Stakeholder Service, Stakeholder Commitment and Stakeholder Contact, Understanding Customer and other Stakeholders' Contemporary and Latent Needs, Long-time Scale, Life-time Value and Client Retention and Customer Share Instead of Market Share**

Based on the CA's Introduction to Cricket, as an online service, this subsection illustrates the following four RM indicators concomitantly:

- High stakeholder service, stakeholder commitment and stakeholder contact;
- Understanding customer and other stakeholders' contemporary and latent needs;
- Long-time scale, life-time value and client retention and
- Customer share instead of market share.

If a sustainable business could be a pre-requisite of sustainable competitive advantage, then high stakeholder service, stakeholder commitment and stakeholder contact should be a pre-requisite of sustainable business. Stavros (2005) demonstrated that these are one of the key aspects of RM. Again, Kurtz (2009) described that RM positions customer service as a high priority, as well as promotes stakeholder's commitment. Simultaneously, understanding customer and other stakeholders' contemporary and latent needs becomes the key of advanced customer satisfaction (Kurtz, 2009; Buttle, 2009) by delighting them through meeting and serving beyond their contemporary and latent needs. Kurtz (2009) further exemplified that one of the major forces driving the push from transactional marketing to RM is the realization of retaining customers is much more profitable than losing them, where RM guides to customer retention through understanding their needs, wants and demands as misunderstanding of the market needs leads to losing of customers. Again, Ian (2005) suggested that listening to customers and collecting feedback from them (which are part of RM's high stakeholder contact) helps marketers to understand their needs. Consequently, RM guides to delight customers and other stakeholders by understanding their contemporary and latent needs as Kurtz (2009, p. 317) further explained that:

*As part of an ongoing relationship with customers, marketers must continually measure and improve how well they understand and meet customer's needs. Knowledge of what customers need, want and expect is a continual concern of company's focus on building long-term relationship aiming to retain them.*

Again, RM facilitates long-term business rather than short-term (Kurtz, 2009). Gummesson (2002, p. 15) explains that "extending the duration of the relationship becomes a major marketing goal". Success is seen in RM in terms of how long a customer is kept in the relationship and how much and how long that individual customer continues to purchase (Little & Marandi 2003). Little and Marandi (2003, p. 29) also suggest that "each company will need to experiment and improve the techniques that are used to predict how much business a customer is likely to do with them". Stavros (2005, p. 29) describes that "customer needs are identified in RM to generate specific client related customer service, which maximises the client retention rather than transactional marketing". Again, Little and Marandi (2003, p. 29) illustrate that "RM shifts the emphasis from concentrating on gaining share of market to keeping clients and attempting to gain a bigger share from them", as RM emphasises retaining customers over making sales only (Kurtz, 2009).

From these perspectives, CA introduces Introduction to Cricket, as an online introductory and free program of cricket coaching, umpiring and team management of CA, which aims to educate parents, schoolteachers, volunteers or anyone who wants to help junior cricket or wants to forward the first step in coaching or umpiring career (Coaching, 2009). CA stated the significance of the program as:

*Whether you are a coach of a junior or school team, a school teacher, a MILO in2CRICKET Coordinator or simply a volunteer providing an opportunity for kids to play cricket, this program will help you play your part in making cricket .... Australia's Favourite Sport. Enjoy Introduction to Cricket – it's the first step in your coaching and umpiring journey (Introduction to Cricket Online Video Transcript, 2009, np).*

The successful candidate of the program is awarded the accreditation of Australian Sports Commission in both introductory coaching and umpiring and becoming a member of Cricket Coaches Australia for the two-year, along with gaining discounts on resources and access to the members' only website (Introduction to Cricket, 2009). Through the program's website, CA welcomes to register or log on in the program, which is a full free introductory program in coaching and umpiring. Anyone can enrol in the program at any time of the year and receives a welcome email from the Australian national team head coach, as soon as they enrol (Shams, 2011b). The Coaching Courses (2009) link page starts with the brief description of National Coaching Accreditation Scheme accredited coaching programs, including orientation to coaching, level-1 (development), level-2 (advanced) and level-3 (elite) coaching programs. CA's one of the strategies against the goal of "grow the financial resources available to invest the game" is "grow revenue by building cricket's products around needs of customers, major sponsors and media partners" (Cricket Australia, 2009, p. 4). Consequently, CA offers level-1 and level-2 coaching programs on Australian \$120 and Australian \$500 respectively (Cricket NSW, 2008), whereas the level-3 program is more costly. CA's 'Overview' is an online coaching magazine published quarterly and sent to all accredited coaches of Australia as an e-newsletter. Various coaching resources are available in the link of resources web-page. Through this page, CA offers various crickets and associated products on certain prices for members and non-members (Cricket Coaches Australia, 2008).

The Chief Executive Officer of CA mentioned that "with children enjoying their participation in cricket the game will continue to grow and prosper" (Sutherland, 2004, p. 3). Consequently, CA is committed to initiating the first cricketing experience of boys and girls by accredited cricket coaches to make it fun and memorable. For this CA targets the parents, schoolteachers and volunteers and offers them the free online Introduction to Cricket program. In this way, kids are learning cricket at home, schools or local clubs, as well as, CA gains additional accredited coaching volunteer staff through a relationship building exercise among schools, cricket clubs, volunteers and parents. The individual receives a welcome message from the Australian Head Coach to join his coaching team while she or he registers for the Introduction to Cricket program. After that they achieve the two-year membership by successfully completing the free Introduction to Cricket online program. During these two years of memberships, the junior coaches receive regular e-newsletter containing various stimulating topics on coaching and umpiring, discounted offers on cricketing products. Furthermore, CA offers the higher coaching programs on certain price. Usually an individual intends to initiate the higher programs after the certain period of her/his first free Introduction to Cricket Program. So, CA builds up the relationship with its stakeholder first, makes their awareness by understanding their needs, then sell products by stimulating, meeting and exceeding those needs.

Based on their initial understanding of contemporary needs of junior cricket and coaching needs (junior cricket needs to flourish from home, school or local club with fun and relaxed environment instead of traditional high-pressured cricket coaching environment), CA adapted the traditional coaching education system with their customized offerings for parents, school teachers, volunteers. Initially, CA offers two-year membership for the junior level coaches, which can be extendable based on their performance and intention to enrol in higher level coaching programs. So, CA encourages long-time scale business, lifetime value and customer retention. Simultaneously, CA promotes the theme of customer share instead of market share, as they motivate the junior coaches toward the higher-level coaching programs through their extensive communication and mentoring process. Moreover, CA is committed to flourish new business through the understanding of stakeholders' needs,

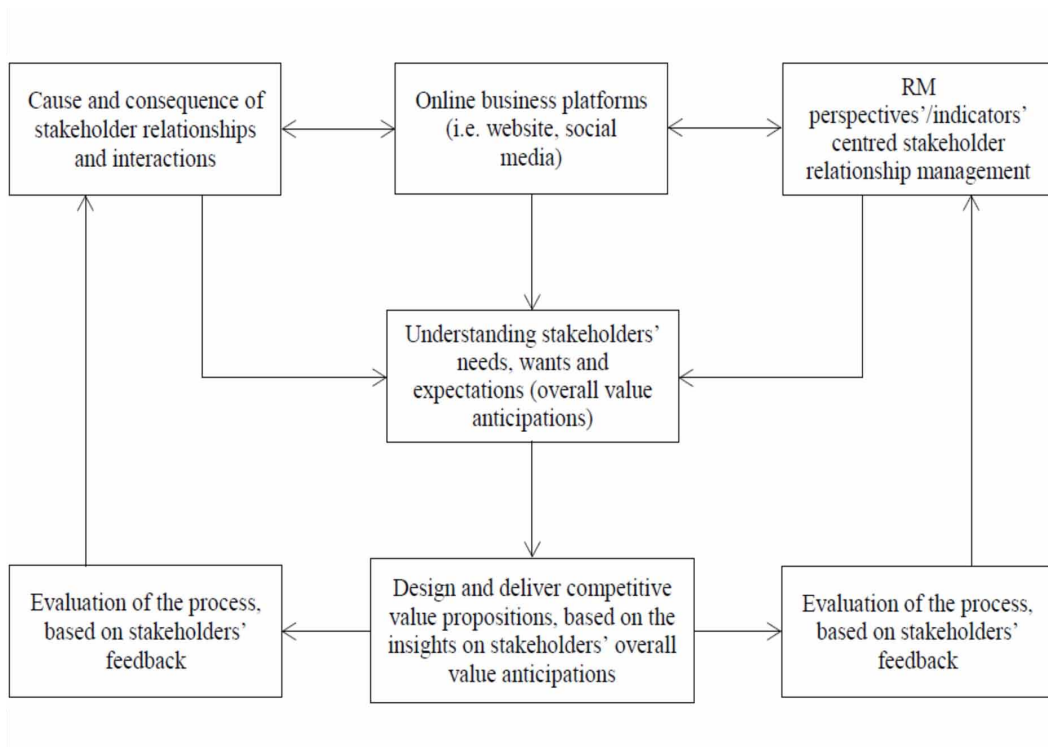
and Introduction to Cricket could be one of the examples against such commitment. Consequently, CA delivers high stakeholder service, stakeholder commitment and contact, as they communicate regularly and update their member coaches with the changes and new addition of coaching education.

One of the key competitive advantages through such a free Introduction to Cricket online program is CA develops a country wide group of accredited junior coaching staff without paying them, which helps CA to accelerate towards their vision ‘Cricket-Australia’s favourite sport’ (Cricket Australia, 2009). Moreover, following the initial membership of two years, CA engages the interested volunteer coaches in long-run focused relationship, which allows CA to reduce the opportunity of the volunteers to engage with other mainstream sports of Australia, such as Rugby or Australian Rules Football. Also, such an online venture allows CA to educate Australians about cricket, which is free of cost for the trainees and requires less managerial and organizational effort from CA, as the whole program is online and user friendly and users can initiate, interval and continue the program anytime they want.

## DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Figure 1 summarises the arguments of this article, in order to demonstrate an initial Relationship Marketing (RM) based framework to design and deliver competitive value propositions through online business platforms. The evolution of the Internet and consequent online and on time communication mediums have been playing a key role to prolifically reach the target market. Simultaneously, RM has become the fundamental concept of contemporary marketing practices in order to establish, maintain and enhance competitive advantage by meeting and exceeding customers’ anticipation in a way that customers expect and accept. Following the initial literature review on RM, this article illustrates a number of key RM perspectives, which are standardized as RM indicators in a series of grown sports

Figure 1. A conceptual framework to design and deliver competitive value propositions



organizations, with a focus on RM indicator centred online market offerings of the organizations, in order to recognize the RM indicators that would be utilized to attain and retain competitive advantages through internet marketing (market space), as the literature review shows that RM is the finest way to manage competitive advantage in the contemporary marketplaces. Fifteen RM indicators are described in the chapter, where the result outline that the grown organizations have been utilizing the RM indicators through their online market offerings that could be able to establish, maintain and enhance their competitive advantage. The lesson of facilitating competitive advantage through the RM indicator centred online market offering, learnt from the sport industry could be applicable to any industry and market, as the whole process is RM centred, and RM can be applied to all types of organizations and offerings, but the relationship portfolio and application are always specific to a given situation of the target market (Gummesson, 2002).

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