

# Driving Growth in Indian Golf: A Business and Economic Analysis of Participation, Accessibility and Commercial Sustainability

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyse the construct of ‘affordability and accessibility, infrastructure, business strategies’ and explore its effects on the development and commercial viability of golf in India. This study was conducted using an interpretivist philosophy, deductive approach, and an explanatory research design. Secondary data was collected and analysed through thematic analysis from academic journals, industry reports, and government materials. The report highlights that while the business side of Indian golf presents a friendly face in terms of tourism, funding and branding, the notion of the elite, costs of participation and lack of infrastructure constraints make it less attractive for the wider population. The study points out the importance of establishing a balance between return on investment and social inclusiveness to achieve sustainable growth. The study’s recommendations encompass low-cost membership rates, placement of play-to-play services, digital marketing, and partnerships to enhance access and sales strategy. The study will provide several implications applicable to golf organisations, policy makers and businesses interested in securing long-term economic expansion in the golf sector in India.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

Sport contributes to social inclusion, economic development, and leisure industry growth. Golf in India has been developing over the years based on the favourable conditions of rising purchasing power, urbanisation, third sector support and the discussion regarding sports related to enjoyment (Pandey et al., 2024). As such, this trend has resulted in for Indian golf club market to increase its revenue by USD 72.5 million in 2019, which is projected for further increase to USD 95.1 million by 2027. (Grand View Research, 2024). However, despite the development of golf commerce, fairly few are engaged in golf today due to its relatively high cost of play and restrict access of golf courses to golf and the perceived status of golf as an elite sport. This disparity implies that increases in the markets do not necessarily lead to increases in participation or sustainability of markets in the longer term.

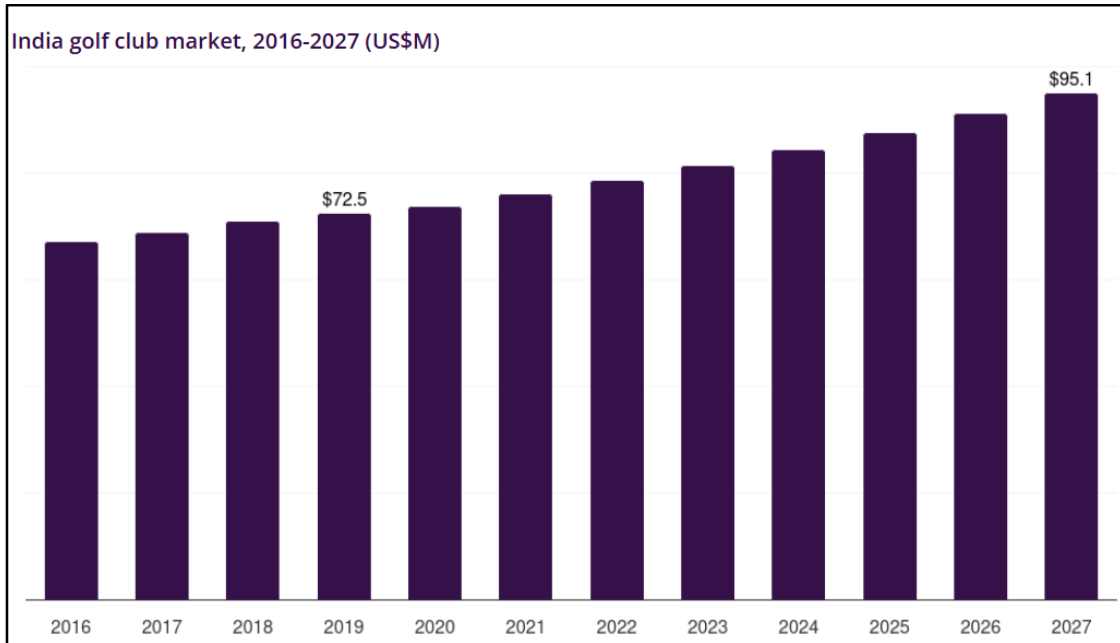


**Figure 1.1: India golf club market**

(Source: Grand View Research, 2024)

## 1.2 Research Aim

The study aims to analyse how participation, accessibility, and commercial sustainability influence the growth of golf in India and identify strategies for long-term business and economic development.

## 1.3 Research Objectives

**Primary Research Objectives:** To identify the principal commercial and economic barriers restricting the development of golf in India and assess business strategies which could increase the accessibility and commercial viability of golf.

### **Sub Objectives:**

- To analyse how affordability, accessibility, and infrastructure influence participation and the growth of golf in India.
- To identify the key commercial and economic barriers limiting participation in golf in India.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of business and marketing strategies in improving the accessibility and commercial sustainability of golf in India.

## 1.4 Research Question

**Primary Research Question:** What are the key commercial and economic barriers limiting the growth of golf in India, and what business strategies can make the sport more accessible and commercially sustainable?

**Sub Questions:**

1. How do affordability, accessibility, and infrastructure influence participation and the growth of golf in India?
2. What are the key commercial and economic barriers limiting participation in golf in India?
3. To what extent can business and marketing strategies improve the accessibility and commercial sustainability of golf in India?

**1.5 Problem statement / Rationale of the research**

Although golf is becoming increasingly popular in India for commercialisation, it still has limited participation and difficulty in playing the game. Although golf is fast gaining popularity, awareness is still relatively low, with only 12% of the population having access to golf facilities in Rural areas (Ken Research, 2020). In this context, it is identified that the high cost of the game, including the fees for playing golf, equipment costs, and membership fees, is the key barrier to wider participation (Hall et al., 2025). For example, a full set of golf clubs can cost between \$600-3500 which acts as a barrier to participation due to the expense, particularly with younger and lower-income consumers (Ken Research, 2020). Nevertheless, growing Indian golf would be relevant in developing the Indian sports and leisure industry, where companies are exploring opportunities for ‘bottom line’ sustainable growth.

**1.6 Significance**

This study also helps to understand the key reasons behind golf participation and thus the commercial sustainability of the game in India. It provides a form of customer feedback to companies, golf course operators, and the policy makers regarding possible avenues to broaden the game and further expand the market. Further, it adds to a larger body of framework towards creating a more inclusive and economically sustainable golf industry.

**2. Literature Review****2.1 Affordability, Accessibility, and Infrastructure Influencing Golf Participation and Growth in India**

Sports participation and sports entrepreneurship development are recognised to be influenced by issues of affordability, accessibility, and infrastructure in India. Macías et al. (2023) conducted semi-structured interviews with 5 five managers and identified these factors, such as exclusive membership and the high cost of golf equipment, as significant challenges. These evolved around private clubs, private members, costly golf clubs, and extra maintenance fees. Carson et al. (2022) conducted a systematic literature review and stated that golf courses are concentrated in large towns and cities, making it a challenge for people living in smaller towns and cities.

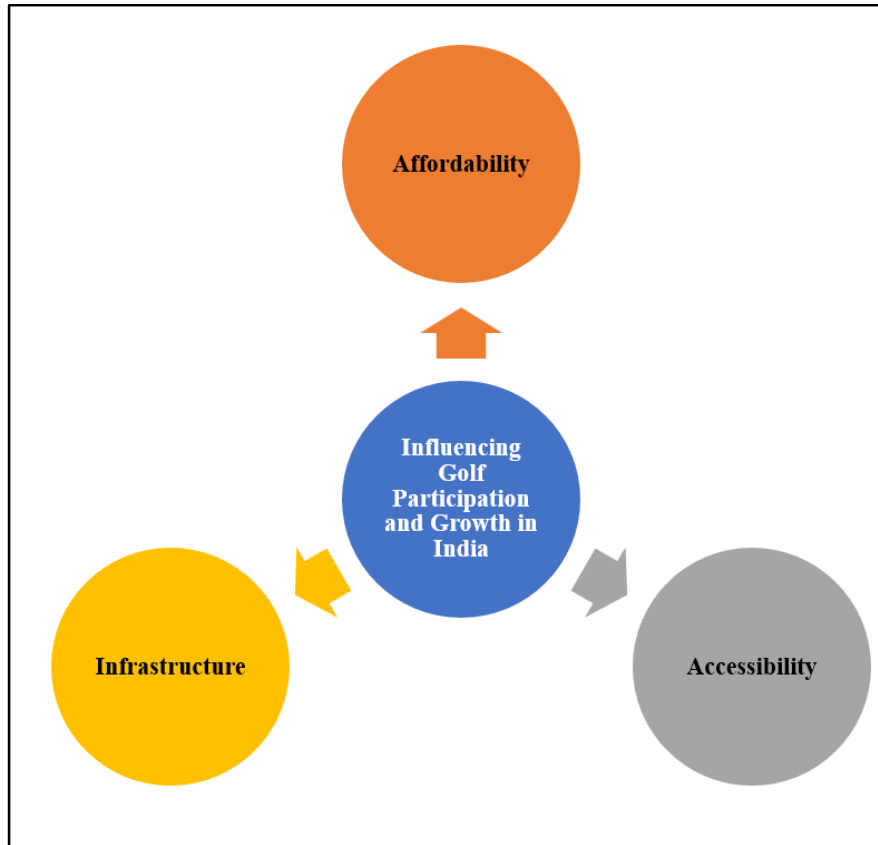


**Figure 2.1: Influencing Golf Participation and Growth**

(Source: Author)

Khazaeli & Javadpour (2024) adopted a quantitative predictive modelling approach and indicated that programs like the pay and play club, golf academies and corporate investment have attempted to increase the accessibility of the game. But such improvements do not yet affect the structural challenges of cost and poor infrastructure. According to Macías et al. (2023), the golf market has commercial potential to grow golf, but the benefits don't enjoy a level distribution among population segments. This must be seen as a gap between Indian market development and mass participation, and calls for better organised infrastructure.

## 2.2 Key Commercial and Economic Barriers Limiting Participation in Golf in India

Market composition, affordability, and commercial positioning will be important factors impacting users' engaging in and the sustainable development of sports in the long run. From Song et al. (2022), high participation cost contributes more to the lower and middle social classes, while lower-cost incentives will promote broader participation. Majeed et al. (2025) used a mixed-methods framework, indicating that sports commercialisation brings more to the Income of the selling sport. It is through external investment, but sometimes high-branding will hinder a sport from entry to the broad community.



**Figure 2.2: Commercial And Economic Barriers**

(Source: Authors)

According to Joshi (2025), findings are especially relevant to golf, as that sport has been built in India using private clubs, high club fees, high equipment costs, and instruction from these high-cost entities. On the other hand, cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Shimla, and Pune were among the early-bird golfers, as they were centres of the military establishments and civil services (Joshi, 2025). Also, the infrastructure of the game has been limited, with India having only approximately 195 golf courses, where in a country of such a large population, there are limited opportunities (AV Golf Design, 2025). Thus, commercial strategies have contributed to golf's resilient premium image in the market and participation problems.

### 2.3 Business and Marketing Strategies for Improving Accessibility and Commercial Sustainability of Golf in India

Different perspectives on the application of commercial policies to increase sports participation. Sports marketing Sarpong & Zungu (2025) also confirmed that employing primary and secondary data, placing a sport in a luxury upper-class context via premium branding, enhances the development and economic implications of the activity. It involves a secure source of income and enhances the use for potential sponsors. However, Davis (2026) adopted the qualitative research method and argues that a focus on exclusivity may

lead to social and economic obstacles to participation, resulting in less access for broader groups of consumers. As noted by KGPM (2025), golf is becoming a new high-end sports tourism segment with world-class courses in Delhi NCR, Karnataka, and Kerala, which are attracting rich domestic and international tourists. Accordingly, flexible memberships, pay and play facilities, low-cost coaching programmes and community programmes all open access and bring new participation through inclusive business models. Furthermore, Sarpong & Zungu (2025) indicated that Indian golf organisations offer opportunities for targeting younger consumers and reshaping golf through digital marketing and social media. Thus, it reflect on the need for balance between luxury positioning and inclusive growth in Indian golf organisations.

## 2.4 Theoretical Underpinning

### *Resource-Based View*

A Resource-Based View (RBV) offered by Barney that measures competitive advantage in terms of resource management rather than market performance (Jurevicius, 2023). Furthermore, by using RBV on the Indian golf organisations, Indian golf organisations can develop and sustain strategic resources, including golf infrastructure, golf coaching knowledge, brand equity, digital platform ability, and networks. Therefore, Indian golf organisations should consider applying RBV to develop key resources for long-term success.

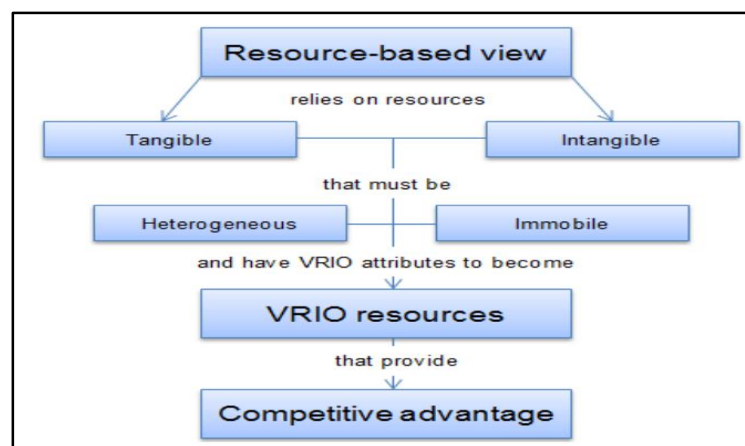


**Figure 2.3: Resource-Based View**

(Source: Jurevicius, 2023)

## 2.5 Literature gap

The literature has shown that the factors of affordability, accessibility, infrastructure concerns, and commercial appeals affect the participation and sustainability of golf. However, few studies have explored the strategic applications of resources within the golf organisations for addressing these challenges in India. Therefore, there is a lack of knowledge identify sustainable pathways to growth in the Indian golf industry.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Philosophy

The Interpretivism approach was adopted in this research to have an in-depth understanding of the various factors influencing golf usage, access, and commercial viability in India. The interpretivist paradigm views situations through the meanings people assign to them, which are developed by individuals and organisations in social contexts (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Using secondary research, it can synthesise the learning regarding the business strategy, economic constrain and customer involvement under the themes and trends. Hence, the philosophy is appropriate to explore a large variety of views leading to the development of the golf industry in India.

#### 3.2 Research Approach

The deductive approach was adopted to identify the factors influencing the participation, access, and the commercial viability of golf in India. This method allows the researcher to draw on previous research and apply existing theories, such as the Resource-Based View, and evaluate evidence from previous studies to develop meaningful conclusions (Proudfoot, 2022). As such, it is important that the deductive method is adopted to investigate the secondary literature and data along the lines of how business strategies and resources can help develop the Indian golf.

#### 3.2 Research Design

An explanatory research design was used to investigate the reasons behind golf participation, access, and commercial success in India. This type of research design is suitable when the factors influencing the phenomenon are going to be determined and the purpose is to examine the cause-and-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Saunders et al., 2019). Hence, this design is suitable as it enables variables investigated are affordability, infrastructure, business plans, the resource management structure, and the development of golf industry.

#### 3.4 Data Collection Method

For this investigation, secondary data will be used to establish the factors responsible for affordability and access, infrastructural barriers, and the sustainable growth of golf in India. The advantages of secondary data are the availability of a wider range of existing evidence and reduced time and cost involved (Cheong et al., 2023). The data was gathered from peer-reviewed scientific journals, trusted sources such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, Springer Link, SAGE Journals, and government websites of India relating to golf sports, such as the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports and other appropriate golf organisations as the second sources. Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT), inclusion and exclusion criteria were employed

to determine relevant evidence. Data screening and analysis were guided systematically in accordance with the PRISMA guidelines.

| Criteria             | Inclusion                                                                                             | Exclusion                                            |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Relevance</b>     | Studies on golf participation, accessibility, infrastructure, business strategies, and sustainability | Unrelated topics or sports                           |
| <b>Time Frame</b>    | Publications from within 8 years                                                                      | Sources before 8 years without theoretical relevance |
| <b>Source Type</b>   | Peer-reviewed journals, academic books, government reports, and official golf publications            | Blogs, opinions, and unverified sources              |
| <b>Credibility</b>   | Recognised authors, institutions, and reliable academic databases                                     | Anonymous or unsupported sources                     |
| <b>Content Focus</b> | Golf economics, marketing, participation barriers, digital strategies, and resource management        | Irrelevant consumer or industry topics               |
| <b>Language</b>      | English publications                                                                                  | Non-English sources without translation              |
| <b>Data Quality</b>  | Evidence-based qualitative and quantitative research                                                  | Opinion-based or unsupported studies                 |

**Table 3.1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

(Source: Author)

| Boolean Operator | Purpose                                       | Example Search Query                                                                                                                  |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AND</b>       | Narrows search by combining specific keywords | "golf participation" AND "accessibility"; "golf industry" AND "commercial sustainability"; "sports marketing" AND "India"             |
| <b>OR</b>        | Broadens search by including related terms    | "golf development" OR "golf growth"; "sports business" OR "sports management"; "digital marketing" OR "social media marketing"        |
| <b>NOT</b>       | Excludes irrelevant results                   | "golf participation" NOT "professional tournaments"; "sports marketing" NOT "football"; "golf industry" NOT "equipment manufacturing" |

**Table 3.2: Boolean Operator**

(Source: Author)

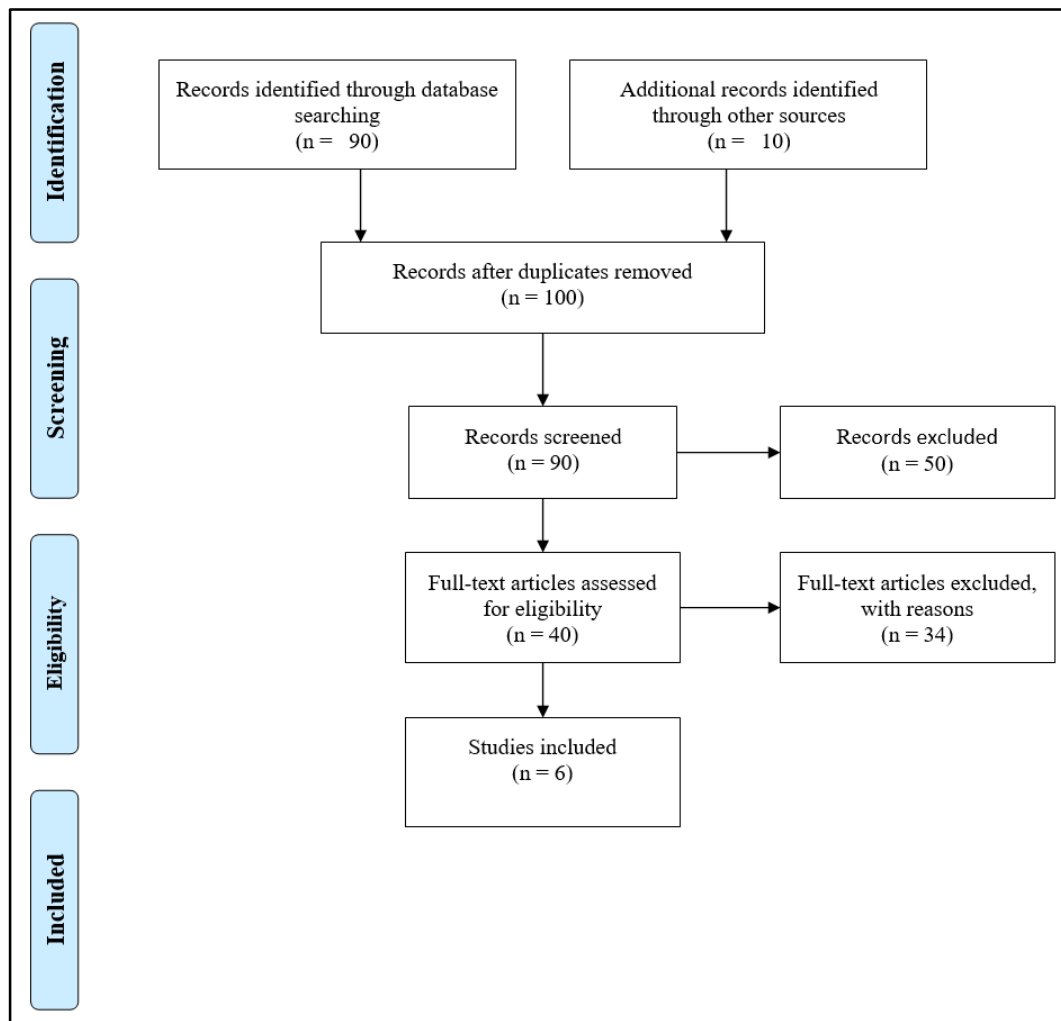


**Figure 3.1: PRISMA Flow Diagram**

(Source: Author)

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted to identify the significant aspects of golf participation, access, infrastructure, and commercial sustainability in India. The study used the six-phase framework proposed by Braun & Clarke (2023), as it is the most popularly used method for analysing qualitative secondary data. The first phase was to familiarise oneself with the data gathered from academic journals, government publications, and golf industry data. The second stage was to develop initial codes around affordability, marketing, and resource strategy. Finally remaining stages are development, review, defining, and reporting themes, which were to be thematic, according to the study 's objective and theoretical approach.

### 3.6 Ethical Consideration

This project also adopted the ethical considerations. The sources used in this research as secondary sources are genuine and are publicly available and reliable sources. All the sources have been acknowledged properly by citing and referencing all sources in the research, so that the work is free from plagiarism. The research maintains integrity and presents the findings objectively without misrepresenting existing research or sources of Indian golf development.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

### 4.1 Findings

#### *Theme 1: Affordability, Accessibility, and Infrastructure Influence on Indian Golf Participation*

| Author                             | Methodology           | Key Findings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Golf Industry Association (2020)   | Secondary Qualitative | Golf Industry Association (2020) study revealed that golf tourism generated by local economic development through raising expenditure, gained employment and assisted hospitality industries. It supported that destination branding was positively affected by hosting golf tournaments and attracted both domestic and international tourists. However, few facilities, additional expenses for use of golf courses and access and inequality limited the overall impact of golf tourism. |
| Arulmozhi & Vinayagamoorthi (2019) | Secondary Qualitative | According to Arulmozhi & Vinayagamoorthi (2019), India has emerged as the destination for various sport tourist events with the rise of football, cricket, Formula One, golf and other events of international popularity. The paper states that golf tourism in India has seen a lot of scope in terms of golf tourists, with high expenditure on golf tours compared to other sports tourists.                                                                                            |

**Table 4.1: Affordability, Accessibility, and Infrastructure Influence on Indian Golf Participation**

(Source: Author)

## Theme 2: Commercial and Economic Constraints on Golf Participation in India

| Author               | Methodology           | Key Findings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chadha et al. (2024) | Primary Quantitative  | Chadha et al. (2024) revealed that arrival in the competitive golf environment generated psychological difficulties for the elite Indian golfers, namely a threefold increase in irrational beliefs, threat evaluation, and cognitive and somatic anxiety that in turn were linked to negative cognitive appraisals and more debilitating interpretations of anxiety. The results imply that intervention against irrational beliefs and threat perception is required for golfers to achieve positive psychological readiness, resulting in competitiveness. |
| Chauhan (2024)       | Secondary Qualitative | The research also established that the state of Uttar Pradesh has a great prospect to emerge as the premier golf tourism state, due to its tremendous natural and cultural resources, historic locales, and progressive government policies. However, due to logistics, language, lack of sponsorship and marketing, weak ecosystem, along with sustainability issues, the growth of sports tourism would be constrained in the state.                                                                                                                        |

**Table 4.2: Commercial and Economic Constraints on Golf Participation in India**

(Source: Author)

## Theme 3: Business and Marketing Approaches for Enhancing Accessibility and Commercial Sustainability in Indian Golf

| Author              | Methodology                 | Key Findings                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ankan et al. (2019) | Secondary Literature Review | Ankan et al. (2019) confirmed that golf is still an emerging sport and is a relatively less popular sport in India due to limited access to golf courses, long association with the upper class and the associated |

|                             |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                             |                          | image and relatively high cost of participation. Moreover, awareness of golf as an Olympic sport and knowledge of Indian professional golfers were also limited. Additionally, Jeev Milkha Singh was identified as the most recognised Indian golfer, while overall public interest and participation remained low.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| PIB<br>Government<br>(2026) | Secondary<br>Qualitative | As per the PIB Government (2026), the Indian Golf Premier League (IGPL) was launched at New Delhi by Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, an initiative which will help to position India as an international destination for golf tourism. The target is to induce USD 2 billion investment over 10 years to golf infrastructure, deepen the connection of sports to tourism, employment generation, economic development of the local areas and achieving Viksit BHARAT 2047. It helps to develop tourism infrastructure in India, creates first class tourism to India from affluent international spenders. |

**Table 4.3: Business and Marketing Approaches for Enhancing Accessibility and Commercial Sustainability in Indian Golf**

(Source: Author)

## 4.2 Analysis

### *Theme 1:*

Macias et al. (2023) pinpointed full expensive fees for playing, expensive equipment, and commercial activity sharing as some of the potential barriers to golf participation. Likewise, the Golf Industry Association (2020) revealed that golf tourism might not generate substantial economic benefits, partially due to the high cost of participation and the lack of golf facilities. Similarly, Carson et al. (2022) claimed that very few golf courses are situated in prominent cities, which restricts the chances of golf participation. On the contrary, Arulmozhi and Vinayagamoorhi (2019) proposed that promoting increased golf facilities and popularising the expensive golf tournaments would enhance tourism, employment, and economic development. In addition, Khazaeli and Javadpour (2024) acknowledge that pay and play facilities and golf academies have enhanced accessibility. However, the Golf Industry Association (2020) indicated that this is not enough, as there is no long-term

infrastructure investment. Thus, the literature highlights that sustainable golf growth involves both commercial development and the right means to increase participation.

### ***Theme 2:***

Song et al. (2022) suggested high participation fees as a key obstacle for lower and middle-income levels and lower cost incentives as mechanisms to bring a broader participation. Moreover, Chauhan (2024) suggested that investment alone is insufficient due to challenges in sponsorship, marketing, logistics, and ecosystem development, despite the tourism potential. Equally, Joshi (2025) claims that Indian golf has been developed through the owners of privatised clubs. These have been brought about by high costs of equipment and membership, and have been often situated in the urban centres of Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. Conversely, Majeed et al. (2025) concluded that commercialisation and private investment would boost revenue generation and market development. Golf Design (2025) also found the reduction of golf facilities to only around 195 golf courses as another significant access issue. Conversely, Chadha et al. (2024) approached access in terms of psychological barriers among elite players to highlight that the problem of golf growth is not just economic restrictions. In line with this evidence, it can be stated that a combination of economic, infrastructural, and participation-related measures is essential for sustainability.

### ***Theme 3:***

Sarpong and Zungu (2025) reflected that the combination of premium branding and luxury positioning, along with digital marketing, may therefore enhance the identity of golf and help generate sponsorship/ revenue streams. Likewise, PIB Government (2026) states activities like the Indian Golf Premier League could foster infrastructure development, attract investment, generate golf tourism and consequently employment in conjunction with nation-building targets like Viksit Bharat 2047. Conversely, Davis (2026) proposed that an overly exclusive nature could act as a barrier to society and the economy, thus discouraging maximum involvement. This aligns with Ankan et al. (2019) found that high costs, lack of public access to golf courses, low awareness of golf as an Olympic sport, and the lack of recognition of Indian golfers was a deterrent to involvement. In addition, KGPM (2025) highlighted the opportunities for premium golf tourism facilities. Therefore, the reviewed studies suggested that Indian golf organisations should develop ‘a hybrid mix of commercial and inclusion policies’ to have a sustainable path of growth.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

This research concludes that the development of Indian golf is a combination of an interaction between affordability, accessibility, infrastructure, and commercial strategy. Despite some economic strength due to tourism, investment and high-quality branding, the large participation cost and lack of openness have imposed

limitations on the industry. Hence, sustainable development could be maintained by not counteracting commercial profits with the provision of cheap services, a good infrastructure, digital marketing, and community involvement.

## 5.2 Study Limitations

This research utilises secondary data and will not integrate personal opinions from golfers, business or policy makers on their experiences and views. They are depending on other studies, reports and database which have unavoidable limitations concerning to methodology, data and interpretation for the general theory and the research application.

## 5.3 Future Scope

Additional research on consumer behaviour, digital participation, and benefits of inclusive golf initiatives could be undertaken by collecting primary data. A benchmark comparison between India and a country with fastest growing golf could be an interesting mode of finding out the best practices suited for adoption to enhance reach, participation, and commercial sustainability.

## 5.4 Recommendation

### 5.4.1 *Developing Affordable and Inclusive Golf Participation Models*

Indian golf bodies should establish low-cost memberships, pay-and-play courses, and community coaching programmes. Australia has adopted similar new add-ons to the access pathways such as TeeMates, Australia's community outreach club model, and the junior development programs (Golf Australia, 2023). India would benefit by doing the same to widen the range of pathway options and the access to golf for the younger, middle-income sections.

### 5.4.2 *Strengthening Digital Marketing and Golf Tourism Strategies*

In the Indian golf industry, there needs to be much more digital marketing, social media marketing and tourism collaborations and partnerships to draw in new markets and tourists. For example, Singapore has integrated golf tourism, international competitions, and golf promotion by government programs (Huat, 2026). India should follow the same path for commercial sustainability and effective global golf positioning.

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