



## A study on the Not-for-Profit Route to Olympic Gold

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**W.P. No. 2015-03-03**  
March 2015

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to investigate a Not-for-Profit (NFP) model for development and support of sports at elite level. This research investigates, Olympic Gold Quest, a NFP organization in India to understand and analyse the factors that contribute to its success in developing sports at elite level and as an NFP to solicit funds for support.

**Design/ Methodology/ Approach**-The research is based on the case analysis of the organization, Olympic Gold Quest (OGQ). The analysis was done through in-depth interviews of various stakeholders of the organization such as directors, donors, employees, athletes, fans and sports enthusiasts. These were supplemented by information from other sources such as scholarly papers, annual reports of organizations working in similar space, online sources and videos interviews on video sharing websites.

**Findings**– The analysis shows that there are two elements of OGQ’s success, the first one is related to the success in sports development and the second aspect is related to its success as a NFP organization. The factors leading to its success in sports domain are due to its stringent selection process of athletes, a strategy based on focus investments, bringing together expertise support and fast support response. The essential factors of OGQ’s success as a NFP are related to creating legitimacy, transparency, beneficiary management and expertise in marketing.

**Originality/Value** – The literature in the domain of development of sport at the elite level is limited. This paper is possibly one of the rare ones that examine the role of a NFP in working towards development of sports at elite level. This research is set in the context of an emerging country and highlights issues related to sports development in emerging economies and contributes to the literature in this domain.

**Implications/Limitations**–We contribute to the literature on sports development and Not-for-Profits. This study proposes NFPs as a viable model to support sports development for elite sports and identifies its success factors. Insights from this research can be applied to develop similar models for supporting sports in other emerging countries.

**Keywords**– Sports, Sports development, Olympics, Elite sports, Not-for-profit, Case study

**Paper type** - Case study

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## 1. Introduction

Sport contributes to nations' economic, social, cultural and political development (Houlihan and White, 2002). In fact the relationship of sports and development is two way, economic success of a nation and societal well-being, leads to better performance in sports, at both grass root level and elite level (Houlihan and White, 2002). Also investment and development of sports leads to positive impact on economy, social and cultural aspects (Levermore, 2008). The sports excellence and performance at elite sports competitions (like Olympics, World championships), symbolizes national pride and political prestige (Čustonja and Škorić, 2011). Also, success at such international events can raise the spirit of people (Wilson, 2013), and failures can lead to a feeling of shame and humiliation (Bowman, 2014). As a result, people tend to look forward to their countries performance in sports and countries spend huge sums of money to support the athletes at such elite levels (Grix and Carmichael, 2012). However, there is a large difference in performance across nations at elite competitions. The London Olympics 2012 medals table indicates that just five nations won about 50% of the gold medals and 40% of the total medals at stake. This gap in performance between countries results from the difference in resource availability (Grix and Carmichael, 2012) and difference in support system (De Bosscher et al., 2009) for athletes at the elite level.

Given the positive impact of sports success on development and its impact on a nation's prestige at a global stage, countries wish to invest in sports (Grix and Carmichael, 2012). However, it is extremely difficult for developing countries to devote precious resources towards sports developments. The limited resource for sports results in a vicious cycle of underperformance in sports and inability to attract investments for sports. If these countries want to come out of the vicious cycle of underperformance and lack of resources they would either need to invest heavily in sports, or develop alternatives models for supporting the athletes through other sources. The objective of this paper is to examine one such model, pioneered in a developing country, and to identify factors that make this model successful. This study could provide insights that can help development of sports and result in better performance at elite levels across the developing countries. We root this study in India, which is home to one-fifth of world's population, and has been a perennial underachiever at Olympics. A private Not for-Profit (NFP), Olympic Gold Quest (OGQ), has been able to significantly improve India's performance at elite sports through energizing people of the nation. This research study is focused on OGQ and applies a case study approach to identify factors that have contributed to the success of OGQ. The insights from this study can help in development of similar organizations in other developing countries, as a support structure to improve performance and, levelling the unequal playing field at the elite level.

## 2. Background

Olympic Gold Quest is a private non-profit organization, founded by sportsmen, Geet Sethi and Prakash Padukone<sup>1</sup> in 2007, with the aim to bring the Indian athletes at par with the best athletes in the world and to provide them support in winning win Olympic medals. OGQ finances its operations by soliciting donations and contributions from donors belonging to different segments.

After the first attempt in 2008 Olympic, where OGQ supported Gagan Narang as its only athlete, OGQ supported 33 athletes of which sixteen qualified for the 2012 London Olympics. Out of the total six medals won by the Indian athletes in these games, 4 medals were bagged

by OGQ supported athletes, which was two-third of India's total medal count. India's medal count of six at the games equalled the total number of medals won by India in the Olympic Games from 1984 to 2008, seven consecutive Olympics. In the more recent 2014 Commonwealth Games, 215 Indian athletes participated and won 64 medals, of these twenty athletes were supported by OGQ, and 15 of these OGQ athletes together won sixteen medals. This meant that while OGQ supported one-tenth of athletes from the Indian squad, these athletes won one-fourth of total medals won by Indian athletes. Much credit has been given to OGQ for the recent improvement in India's performance at international competitions (Zumbach, 2012). OGQ has also been fairly successful in popularizing the Olympic Games (Sethi, 2012) in a Cricket dominated nation, India. Through its digital and social media marketing initiatives OGQ has been able to create a community on Facebook of over 1.1 million sports enthusiasts who interact, share and contribute towards OGQ. During London Olympics alone, the OGQ Facebook page received over 5.3 Million impressions.

The focus of this paper is OGQ and the objective is to identify the factors that have led to the success of OGQ towards improving India's performance at the Olympic Games. The study of interest is the NFP model, based on donations and contributions, to achieve success in sports at elite level. The structure of the rest of the article is as follows, we start with literature review, which covers literature on, sports and its development, participation and competition at Olympics, different models of sports development and characteristics and issues related to NFPs. Next, we discuss the research methodology and the OGQ case. Then, using a case method approach we study the organization and discuss the findings. Finally, at the end we summarize the findings and discuss the implications of the study.

### 3. Literature Review

The objective of this paper is to study the Non-for-Profit (NFP) organization, Olympic Gold Quest, in order to identify the key dimensions of its success, towards supporting sports at elite level and in helping to improve India's performance at Olympics. As the paper touches dimensions related to sports, sports development and NFPs, we carry out a detailed literature review pertaining to these. Accordingly, we review the literature on sports development as an important aspect of a nation's development, the importance of winning in Olympic Games for national pride, and factors that contribute in winning medals. Subsequent to this, we examine the literature on role of funding and financial support for winning of medals at Olympics and discuss some of the models adopted across countries in their quest for Olympic medals. Given the focus on NFPs, we discuss the literature on NFPs and the factors that are essential for the successful management and marketing of cause to attract funds.

#### 3.1 Sports and Development

Sports and development are reactive and proactive to each other (Houlihan and White, 2002). The reactive definition, *development through sports*, emphasizes sports as a vehicle of communication with social objective and as a tool of human capital development (Levermore, 2008; Kidd, 2011; Ho"glund and Sundberg, 2008), from education and youth development; to physical (and mental) well-being (Madichie, 2013). Whereas, the proactive definition, *development of sports*, focuses on sports performance, particularly at elite level, to foster national pride and intense patriotism (Levermore and Beacom, 2009; Hilvoorde, Elling and Stokvis, 2010).

There is increasing research done in the field of sports development, to understand the impact of sports on cultural and social change that can be brought through physical and emotional aspects of sports (Levermore and Beacom, 2009). At the World Sport's Forum in March 2000 Louise Fréchette, the UN Deputy Secretary General, stated that, "The power of sports is far more than symbolic. You are engines of economic growth. You are a force for gender equality. You can bring youth and others in from the margins, strengthening the social fabric. You can promote communication and help heal the divisions between peoples, communities and entire nations. You can set an example of fair play". There is sufficient evidence in the literature to support that sports leads to development of nations. Researchers have pointed out that sports enable human development, promotes good health, social interaction, and healthy competition, at the same time, excellence in sports can foster harmony, a sense of pride and at certain occasions intense patriotism (Levermore and Beacom, 2009; Hilvoorde, Elling and Stokvis, 2010). The proactive development of sports can be defined as "a process whereby effective opportunities, processes, systems, and structures are set up to enable and encourage people in all or particular groups and areas to take part in sport...or to improve their performance to whatever level they desire" (Eady, 1993).

The focus on sports can be at two different levels, at *grass root* (mass) and at *elite level* (Bramham, 2001). Together both the approaches form a 'virtuous cycle' for the development of sports. The *grass root* approach is a 'bottom-up' approach where a large base of athletes is created at junior levels which facilitates graduation of athletes to elite levels and increases the standard through competition. The other route of supporting athletes is at the *elite level*. It is a 'top-down' approach, by focusing on top athletes and highlighting the winning of titles encourages people to take up sport, ultimately resulting in a large base of participants (Van Bottenburg, 2002; Hanstad and Skille, 2010). Mass sports development or grass root programs are structured to deliver national health and socioeconomic benefits to the country, while development at top of performance pyramid or elite level prepares international competitors to produce world champions (Farmer and Arnaudon, 1996).

The approach that nations adopt towards developing sports depends on their objective which can be of various types, like political, cultural, sociological or economic (Houlihan and White, 2002; Chalip, Chalip, Johnson and Stachura, 1996) and these impact the amount and the nature of the nation's investment in sports development. China aimed to excel in sporting arena to pursue its ideological superiority and national status (Chen Yin, 1963). As a result it spent huge resources in supporting medal-winning, sports and athletes, for competition at elite level (Hong, Wu and Xiong, 2005), and on academies to build a base for elite athletes. On the other hand, the Australian government approach sports development with the primary aim to enrich the lives of all Australians through sport (ASC Annual Report 08-09)<sup>ii</sup> and appointed Australian Sports Commission (ASC) with this mission. ASC has approached sports development through its division based structure for overall sport development. Participation and Sustainable Sports division focuses at grass roots level on building the capability and capacity of National Sporting Organizations (NSOs) and their delivery, while Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) fosters high performance sport for international competitive success at elite level (Commonwealth of Australia 2010, The Pathway to success)<sup>iii</sup>. The two nations differ in their sports development objective and thus differ in the policies of sports development. China, working towards establishing its sports supremacy, focuses on building sports structure to develop elite athletes and on academies to feed the pipeline for elite

athletes, while Australia with the aim for overall sports development for the nation, concentrates on multiple aspects of sports, elite and grass root.

### ***3.2 Competing at elite level: Olympics***

Elite sports competitions are viewed as a symbol of national pride (Čustonja and Škorić, 2011) and the athletic achievements in international sport symbolize national excellence (MacAloon, 1981). Olympics is the epitome of sporting spectacle and the rising levels of competition and record breaking achievements, have turned Olympics into a social and cultural spectacle, without parallel in kind or in scope, in the present century (Strenk, 1979). It has become a meeting ground for rival nations, where they battle ideological supremacy while competing on a sports field (Grix and Carmichael, 2012). Despite the International Olympic Committee's refusal to recognize country rankings by medals, the medal table is updated on a regular basis and plays a dominant role in media coverage and public interest (Čustonja and Škorić, 2011; Strenk, 1979). Thus Olympics signify political dominance and countries often give their best to win more medals at Olympics (Grix and Carmichael, 2012).

The investment and economic status of a nation, are said to be the strongest predictor of success in Olympics (Lui and Suen, 2008; Bowater, 2012). Besides this, other predictors of Olympics success are GDP, population, host or neighbouring country advantage, political system, health expenditure per capita, climate and population size (Čustonja and Škorić, 2011). Towards the goal to win Olympic medals, nations spend millions of dollars on sports programs and extend extensive support to their Olympic athletes (Grix and Carmichael, 2012). The success at elite sports is said to be a function of facilities for elite sports persons, a broad base of participation (De Bosscher, et.al., 2006; Grix and Carmichael, 2012) talent identification process (Regnier, Salmela, and Russell, 1993; De Bosscher et al., 2009) and organized and dedicated sports system with efficient management (Shibli, Gratton and Bingham, 2012). The elite performance and achievement thus depends upon developing sports programs through scientific research in training, putting best coaches, providing professional medical assistance and multi layered competition opportunities focused on preparation for international events (Bingham and Simon, 2008; De Bosscher et al., 2009). Also, extending considerable social benefits to the Olympic winners (Strenk, 1979), career support after athletic career stagnation (Green and Houlihan, 2005) and motivational climate (Pensgaard and Roberts, 2002; Gould, Dieffenbach and Moffett, 2002) helps in building confidence in athletes and facilitates dedication to athletic goals.

### ***3.3 Approaches towards Olympic funding***

Development of elite sports call for huge investment and financial backing for each medal (Lui and Suen, 2008). Studies have shown that increased spending on elite sports have positively contributed to the number of medals (Bingham and Simon, 2008; Hogan and Norton, 2000). In the quest for international prestige attached to Olympic success (Hilvoorde, Elling and Stokvis, 2010), nations spend millions of dollars on extensive support to their Olympic athletes (Grix and Carmichael, 2012) but the funding structure varies from country to country.

A cursory look at the various models for sports development across countries indicates that there are two broad approaches to support Olympic athletes (Green and Oakley, 2001). One is through government, where substantial sum is spent from national budgets for development of sports and athletes (Shibli, Gratton and Bingham, 2012). China is an example of complete

government led, highly structured model, which works towards focused objectives of bringing Olympic gold medals (Wang, 2013). The China Olympic model is primarily driven through government funds. Such models were common in erstwhile USSR and East Germany and present day North Korea. The other approach is through non-government funds. While, the government design sports budget for political power and supremacy (Čustonja and Škorić, 2011), getting corporate funds require large fan base and media attraction for the sport (Copeland, Frisby and McCarville, 1996). Countries like United States, Britain and Australia have huge sporting culture and have been participating in Olympics since the beginning of modern Olympics 1896 in Athens. These nations have large fan base for Olympic Games, for example 219 Million Americans watched the London Olympics and 130 Million are fans of Olympic movement (USOC annual report 2012)<sup>iv</sup>. Therefore, non-governmental organizations in these countries have scope to generate revenue or funds from corporate sponsors or public support. The US Olympic Committee (USOC) is one such public driven structure, with no federal financial support. USOC gets funding through international sports organizations, corporates and general public (USOC annual report 2012).

The Olympic support structure of Great Britain is a mix of both the above mentioned approaches, government and private funding. The support for athletes comes from two sources; from the government through lottery and treasury funding, and the rest through public and corporate source (Grix and Carmichael, 2012). Both these funding models, the non-profit government model of China and the non-profit non-government model of USOC, have been successful in placing their nations on top of the Olympic medal tally. However, both have either government or International Olympics Committee (IOC) authority.

### **3.4 Not-for-profit management and marketing**

Private Not-for-Profit (NFP) organizations are firms without a financial objective, under private control, which aims to generate a social benefit for a specific sector of society (Gonzalez, Vijande and Casielles, 2002). These organizations are privately run and are not under government control. Their characteristics include non-financial objectives, mission driven, multiple “customers,” and a competitive-cooperative relationship with their competitors (Gallagher and Weinberg, 1991). These private non-profit organizations are motivated by the cause and societal benefits, but are limited by funds and their small organizational structure. The cause of the organization and how they market the cause, is an important factor that impacts the sustainability of the NFPs and the amount of support that they can generate. A cause that is considered worthy, appeals to larger number of people and receives larger support (Mount, 1996). Hence it becomes important for NFPs to market the cause and showcase the impact brought by the organization

**Not-for-profit management:** NFP organizations often function in competitive environment for funds. It is critical for these organizations to have an effective and efficient structure to attract funds which will impact their long term sustainability (Harvey and McCrohan, 1988). The effectiveness in the non-profit arena can be attained through strategic working (Brown and Iverson, 2004) and through a strong management team (Yorke, 1984) that has the required skills, abilities and knowledge for effective task performance (Kennedy, Ferrell, and LeClair, 2001). Although employees in such organizations are passionate about their cause, they often lack business experience or long-term objectives (Bissell, 2003). Hence, organizations need to examine specific skills needed for their businesses and target individuals with those skills, when recruiting new employees (Pope, Isely and Asamoia, 2009). Also, the essential qualities

of management (Sargeant, West and Ford, 2004) and, effective and efficient practices followed by the board of directors (Shilbury, 2001) are evidence of professional running of these organizations (Ridder and McCandless, 2010).

***Not-for-profit marketing:*** Marketing is critical for NFPs as it helps them bring funds, improves the acceptability of the cause and connects them to their beneficiaries. NFPs need to have a positioning strategy as it conveys the values and beliefs of NFPs to the potential and existing donors, and present a compelling reason to support the cause (Dixon, 1996). Every donor segment has its own motivation and responds differently to communication message (Padanyi and Gainer, 2004; Andreasen and Kotler, 2008) and the message that is congruent with the functional bases of the target's attitudes is most persuasive (Shavitt, 1990). Pope et al. (2009) have suggested that to improve fundraising, NFPs should segment their donors as per their motivation and giving behaviour, and target only those individuals who are most likely to donate to their cause. NFPs should start by identifying the supporters, who would be interested in the organization's mission, create relevant offers and communicate these to appeal to the rational and emotional sides of the funders and reach them where they are available (Maynard, 2008).

A non-profit by rule has to 'maintain a consistent style and tone of voice and conduct periodic reviews of both policies and actions to ensure that a consistent personality is projected' (Tapp, 1996, p. 335). This consistency in communication could then be translated into a strong branding exercise, which in-turn has a positive impact on generating funds (Dixon, 1996; Kennedy, 1998; Grounds and Harkness, 1998). Also, NFPs have to establish their legitimacy in the eyes of various external stakeholders, such as donors, government, clients, and members (Ridder and McCandless, 2010) through developing a perception of the organization as ethical and its purpose as benevolent (Sargeant and Lee, 2004) to motivate donations for its cause.

## **4. Research methodology**

### ***4.1 Case study approach***

The aim of this study is to identify the factors of success for OGQ in improving the performance of India at elite sports, specifically the Olympics. This could be done through developing a thorough understanding of the organization, its structure, functioning and marketing. Accordingly, a case study method is employed for the analysis, since its fundamental characteristic is a focus on a particular setting or event (Schramm, 1971; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998).

### ***4.2 Sampling method***

The case analysis was based on stakeholders of a specific organization (OGQ). The stakeholders were divided into, the functional team, the directors, athletes, and donors. The functional team consists of six members and they look after the different aspects of the organization, hence to gain an understanding of all the functional areas, all the six members were interviewed.

A mix of snowball sampling and maximum variation sampling methods was employed (Patton, 2005; Merriam, 1998) to interview directors, athletes, donors and fans. The CEO and one of the directors were separately requested to refer directors, donors and athletes for



interviews. A total of twelve, in depth interviews were conducted with the CEO, the functional team members, directors, athletes, donors and fans.

#### ***4.3 Data collection methods***

The secondary data was collected from organization's website for general information regarding the organization. Annual reports, campaign brochures, and newsletters from OGQ were referred to understand the organizational structure and functioning. Records from Ethnos (OGQ's media partner) were referred to understand marketing aspects of OGQ. OGQ consistently remains in news through its PR activities, thus newspapers, magazines and online articles were referred to supplement the data available from within the company. Information was also collected from videos about OGQ, available on video-sharing website (YouTube) and on social network sites of OGQ, such as Facebook and Twitter and from its official website. In-depth interviews were the key source of primary data, based on questionnaires with broad spectrum of questions (Patton, 2005). Content method analysis was used for qualitative analysis of the material from the interviews, documents and videos (Minichiello, Aroni and Hays, 2008).

### **5. Case Study - Olympic Gold Quest**

#### ***5.1 Background: Sports structure in India***

Success in winning Olympic medals requires high investment and dedicated system. In an emerging country like India where resources are at premium it is difficult to win Olympic medals, when sports are not a priority for the government. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), the government authority responsible for sports in India, has a small budget for sports development and of this budget less than one-tenth is spent on elite sports development. A number of reasons are attributed for the repeated failure of Indian athletes in Olympics and other elite competitions such as politicised functioning of sports federations and government organizations (Sengupta, 2012) and lacks of professionalism and transparency in administration (KPMG report, Business of Sports, 2014). Also, the sports federations and government sports bodies lack ability to successfully implement existing schemes. Further, there is limited funding for sports and inadequate support system like proper infrastructure, skilled coaches and technical know-how on sports; also policies ensuring financial security to players and career options within the sports ecosystem is not sufficient (Sethi, 2012). Big business houses like Mittal, Jindal and TATA have taken initiatives towards sports development in the nation and they have invested extensively in sports as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme (KPMG report, Business of Sports, 2014)<sup>v</sup>. However they have limited understanding of sports and contribution is motivated by their private interest in particular sports.

#### ***5.2 Inception of Olympic Gold Quest***

Olympic Gold Quest was started by Geet Sethi and Prakash Padukone in 2007, as a non-profit foundation. The aim of OGQ is to bridge the gap between the athletes in India and athletes of other countries at elite level. OGQ was started with the mission to help athletes win Olympic gold medals, by identifying the right talent with the potential to compete at elite level and by providing them the right support.

#### ***5.3 Management***

OGQ has eminent personalities on its board of directors from the field of sports and the corporate sector. The sports fraternity on board is represented by Geet Sethi, Prakash

Padukone, V. Anand and Leander Paes; while the corporate sector representatives are Rakesh Khanna, Shitin Desai, R. Ramaraj and NeerajBharadwaj. There are other directors on board such as Niraj Bajaj and Viren Rasquinha who have credibility in both the fields, that of sports and corporate.

| Directors        | Accomplishments   |
|------------------|---|
| Geet Sethi       | The winner of nine world titles in Billiards and Snooker  |
| Prakash Padukone | The nine time national badminton champion and has won the All England Championship in 1981  |
| V. Anand         | World Chess Champion and a current challenger to the World chess champion   |
| Leander Paes     | The second Indian athlete to win an individual Olympic medal and a winner of multiple Grand Slam titles.  |
| Rakesh Khanna    | The founding member of the Executive Forum, an organization which has many CEOs and CFOs of large organizations as its members. He is presently an independent Director on many large corporations, both public and private companies |
| Shitin Desai     | Recognized as one of the leading investment bankers in the country today  |
| R. Ramaraj       | The co-founder of Sify (SIFY), the first Indian internet company to list on NASDAQ  |
| NeerajBharadwaj  | The Board of Apollo Hospitals, the largest telemedicine provider in India. He is a Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum and a Charter Member of The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE).   |
| Niraj Bajaj      | A four time National Table Tennis Champions. He is on the Board of Directors of various prominent Bajaj Group Companies.  |
| Viren Rasquinha  | An Olympian and the former captain of the Indian Hockey team. After retiring from hockey he has completed his MBA from the Indian School of Business  |
| Deepika Padukone | An acclaimed actress in Indian Film Industry and a model, is a former badminton player.   |

**Figure 1.**

Accomplishments of Board of Directors of OGQ

#### **5.4 Functional team of OGQ**

The functional team of OGQ has experts from diverse fields. It comprises of a small team of five people reporting to the CEO. The Research and Analysis team works on gathering and maintaining the data regarding signing and performance of the athletes. The Operations team is responsible for operational and administrative aspects of the organization. The sports science and rehab team comprises of doctors and medical experts to provide physical and mental prescription to injuries. The IT team works on web interface and digital initiatives and the marketing team is responsible for all the marketing and fund raising activities of OGQ.

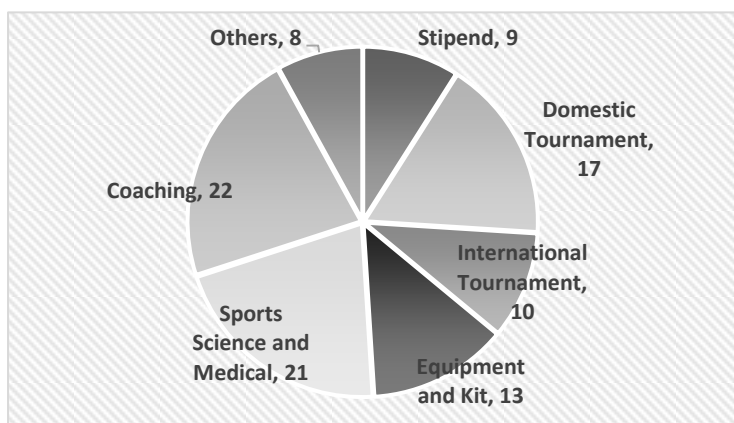
#### **5.5 Scouting and training of athletes:**

The talent scout team is a mix of sports writers/sports journalists and athletes, who work with OGQ in reporting exceptional athletes that they come across at various meets, at states and national level. The CEO, Viren Rasquinha also travels to various sports meets across the country to identify the right talent by observing athletes and discussing with coaches.

The Research and Analysis Wing is responsible for monitoring, tracking and analysing the performance of athletes that OGQ has signed. It also does research and performance analysis of athletes who are likely to get short-listed and signed by OGQ. It closely monitors the top 10-20 athletes in chosen OGQ disciplines. Once a positive trend is identified, more information is sought from experts in the field, regarding qualitative issues related to focus, ambition, motivation levels, work ethics, mental strength and discipline. After scrutinizing these factors the athlete is recommended to the board.

OGQ looks at two important factors before signing an athlete, the capability and the consistency to enter the top  $X^{vi}$ . Once an athlete is signed, a database is created to record the performance of the athlete on a continuous basis. Their performance is also measured against desired performance levels for an Olympic medal. OGQ experts pay regular visits to the athletes to review the training and preparations, and corrective action are taken, if any, under the supervision of the Sports Advisory Committee. Athletes are also supported through funds for their training needs abroad, for obtaining superior training equipment and kits and for international participation in events. OGQ identifies and hires specific coaches for its athletes. It also facilitates medical team and the coaches to travel with the athlete during important events.

The OGQ Sports Science and Rehab team comprises of well-known experts (working part-time, as consultants or pro bono) in the field of physiotherapy, surgery, sports psychology, nutrition and dietetics. This team monitors the fitness of athletes, looks into issues of diet and nutrition, and any medical emergencies.



**Figure 2.**  
Breakup of spends on athletes by OGQ in percentage (Annual Report OGQ 2013-2014)

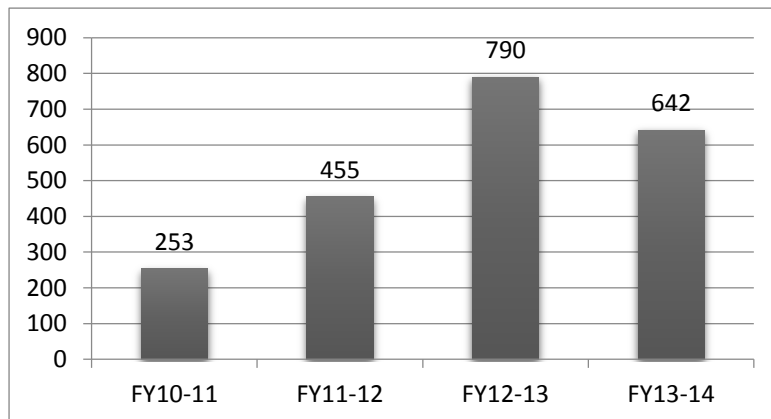
Given the challenge at hand, OGQ has worked to develop a network of partners which helps it in all aspects, from identification of athletes to driving donations and support for the athletes. It works closely with the existing sports system in conjunction with Sports Ministry, SAI and Army Sports Institute to provide support and training to athletes.

### **5.6 Marketing and Funding**

OGQ's entire revenue stream consists of voluntary donations and contributions from individuals or corporate. Hence, getting support for OGQ's cause and seeking donations is a key marketing objective (Rasquinha, 2013, Personal Communication). Another important marketing objective is to increase awareness and popularize OGQ's cause to convert the quest for Olympic Gold into a national movement (Khanna, 2014, Personal Communication; Sethi, 2013, Personal Communication).

The seed funding for OGQ came from the two co-founders. Initial funding needs were met by its directors from private corporate sector. Later as the financial requirements increased, OGQ reached out to corporate/HNI donors who were outside its board. These donors were approached through the network of OGQ's directors. Through its marketing activities, OGQ actively targets three population segments; these are High-Net worth Individuals (HNIs),

corporate leaders and non-HNIs (in India) and more recently have started targeting Non Resident Indians (NRIs).



**Figure 3**  
Donations received by OGQ (in US\$<sup>vii</sup> (000)).

OGQ leverages the network of its directors and their goodwill, to pitch the Olympic cause, to the HNIs and corporate leaders. To connect with donors, OGQ organizes fund-raising dinner two-three times in a year, in different cities, attended by OGQ directors and sports stars. OGQ also organizes visits by the OGQ stars and the directors, to meet the employees of its corporate partners to conduct motivational talks. OGQ encourages its partner to leverage on an OGQ athletes' performance, by putting advertisements/external communication, declaring their support provided to the athlete. An OGQ athlete is required to make at least six days available in a year for OGQ activities or events.

In its quest to expand the footprint of corporate/HNI donations, OGQ signed an MOU with Confederation of Indian Industries (CII)<sup>viii</sup> in January 2012, aimed at promoting corporate involvement through CII. CII is an association of Indian businesses which works towards creating an environment conducive to the growth of industry in the country. It has over 7100 members from both public and private sector including MNCs as well as SMEs. The MOU was likely to provide OGQ an access to a vast network of corporate partners whom they could approach for supporting the athletes.

For the non-HNI segment where the donation size is small, OGQ seeks support through its Power Your Champion (PYC) scheme. The objective of the PYC initiative was to create involvement of common Indians with the OGQ movement and to mobilize funding to fulfil the mission of creating Olympic Champions. The PYC campaign uses both offline and online route to reach its potential donors. The offline mode targets the employees of large OGQ corporate partners or supporters. OGQ presents its cause to the employees and motivate them to donate a small part of their salary every month to support OGQ. Online PYC campaign works through OGQ website and the Facebook page. Also, OGQ uses search engine optimization to drive traffic to its website's and has a donation option on its website.

OGQ has an active presence on social media. It maintains a Facebook page and a Twitter account. The Facebook page of OGQ is actively followed by people and has likes by over 100,000 people while the Twitter account has over 3000 followers. The Facebook page of OGQ is maintained by professionals. It is updated regularly and provides updates on the performance of OGQ stars in various international competitions and on other activities of OGQ. There are also interesting anecdotes about OGQ and its stars and various discussions to

engage visitors. The achievements of the athletes are updated regularly and buzz is created around their achievements. OGQ also manages separate Facebook page of some of its star athletes such as Saina Nehwal and Gagan Narang.

OGQ maintains a strong relationship with print and visual media. It regularly comes up with press releases coinciding with some important happenings or achievement of their athletes. The members of the organization make it a point to be visible in media, doing public appearances and giving interviews related to the work that OGQ is doing.

## **6. Findings and Analysis**

OGQ is a NFP organization which supports Indian athletes towards winning medals at Olympics. In this section we analyse and identify the reasons for OGQ's success. OGQ in its functioning straddles two domains; managing elite sports development and managing fund raising as an efficient and effective NFP. Accordingly, the success factors are analysed from two different perspectives, one pertaining to the success of OGQ in providing support to athletes at elite level and the other related to its success as a NFP in marketing the cause and attracting funds.

### **6.1 Excellence in Sports Support**

#### **6.1.1 Selection**

OGQ has put in place an effective scouting system to identify athletes who have the capability and consistency to compete and win medals at Olympic level. An athlete does not qualify by just being the best in the country, they need to show potential to win gold medal at Olympics. Towards this, besides its own people, OGQ has a network of talent scouts to identify the right athletes. Before signing an athlete the Research and Analysis wing of OGQ starts monitoring the athletes. They use both quantitative and qualitative measures to identify the athletes and monitor their performance. The process of selection of athletes is transparent and fair (Rai, 2014, Personal Communication). Even for its existing athletes, the performance is continuously monitored and they have to meet the predefined performance levels for the support to be continued (Tandon, 2014, Personal Communication).

The selection process, system and thorough monitoring of performance are important parameters of success in building a strong base for sporting excellence (Regnier, Salmela, and Russell, 1993). Given the resource constraints, OGQ needs to have a targeted approach, and the selection and monitoring system is a vital component for its success. The talent identification model set up by OGQ, scouts the best talent in the country with potentials to win at Olympic level and the performance monitoring system assures consistent and high level performance at elite level.

#### **6.1.2 Focused approach**

OGQ adopts a focus strategy in supporting the athletes towards Olympic Gold. As a part of the focus strategy, rather than spreading its efforts on multiple disciplines, it concentrates on six individual disciplines. These disciplines are the ones in which the country has done relatively better in past and there is a good ecosystem (Tandon, 2014, Personal Communication). Similarly, rather than focusing on sports development at multiple levels (grass root, intermediate and elite sports), its focus is on supporting athletes at the elite level. Finally, it demonstrates focus through supporting only a limited number of athletes who have

the ability to compete at the international stage and they need incremental support to move to the next level.

The focus strategy is important for OGQ from multiple perspectives. Firstly, due to limited resources, a focus strategy provides a better impact and demonstrates early success, which is critical for attracting support from the stakeholders. Secondly, OGQ as an organization is still at an early growth stage and is first of its kind; therefore it is critical to validate the model, for which a focus strategy is better suited. While OGQ follows a focus strategy in choosing athletes at elite level, it also realizes that it may have to broaden the base of athletes that it supports. Recently, they have moved towards supporting younger athletes through a scholarship program with a view to build a pipeline of future athletes (Rasquinha, 2013, Personal Communication). However, following its focus strategy, OGQ has limited the scholarship program to selected athletes in sports which have a strong ecosystem and where OGQ has the necessary expertise.

The literature indicates that sports success is a result of focused strategy through systematic and dedicated sports system (De Bosscher et al., 2009; Shibli, Gratton and Bingham, 2012), where instead of spreading its efforts on multiple athletes and sports, it has identified core competencies where it showcase the maximum impact (Hong, Wu and Xiong, 2005). The higher success rate (medals won/number of athletes participated) of OGQ at international events than the Indian team, demonstrates that the focused strategy has worked for OGQ and validates its model.

### **6.1.3 Expertise**

The sports support provided by the government and other agencies, is often bureaucratic and manned by people who have had little exposure or personal experience in sports, at national or international level. The Board of OGQ has sportspersons who have competed at international level. Geet Sethi (Billiards) and V. Anand (Chess) have been world champions in their fields at multiple times, Prakash Padukone (All England Open, Badminton) and Leander Paes (multiple Grand Slams, Olympic medallist) have excelled in their sports and, Viren Rasquinha, the CEO, has captained the Indian hockey team and has represented India at Olympics. The international experience helps the directors in understanding, the physical and mental requirements and needs of an athlete preparing for competitions at that level. They provide OGQ athletes a good guidance through motivational talks and interactive sessions.

OGQ also provide the best in class doctors and medical assistance (Rai, 2014, Personal Communication; Devi, 2014, Personal Communication), as managing injuries and fitness is the most critical for OGQ, and none of the sports federations in India provide proper physiotherapists to their athletes (Rasquinha, 2014). Through the medical team, OGQ is able to provide the highest level of care to its athletes as elite athletes need cutting edge medical care to compete at international level. Even when signing up athletes, OGQ uses its network of experts (coaches, sports journalists etc.) to scout the right talent. Once the athletes are signed, OGQ works with the team of coaches, national and foreign, to train the athletes for such elite sports. The athletes have tremendous respect for the expertise that OGQ has, which help them in preparing for the Olympic Gold (Rai, 2014, Personal Communication; Devi, 2014, Personal Communication).

One of the reasons for OGQ's success is the expertise in the domain that it operates and they are at every level. It also has a network of experts who supplements its internal capabilities. Literature in the domain supports that experts' support is important for the success at elite level, as they can understand athletes' needs, guide them and motivate them (Pensgaard and Roberts, 2002; Gould, Dieffenbach and Moffett, 2002). Similarly, expertise in high quality coaching, training, and world class medical aids, are critical elements of success at elite level (Bingham and Simon, 2008; De Bosscher et al., 2009)

#### **6.1.4 Response**

Sports governing bodies in India have functioned bureaucratically; often a short foreign training stint requires the athlete to follow a long process where they need to run around for necessary clearances (Rasquinha, 2014). A fundamental change that has come about with OGQ is responsiveness to athletes' needs. OGQ has created an atmosphere of open communications, with respect to the as athletes need for equipment, foreign exposure, better coaching and training or medical support (Rasquinha, 2014). The virtue of OGQ lies in the speed and personal attention (Rasquinha, 2012). OGQ athletes identify this promptness in response as a critical element for their sporting success (Rai, 2014, Personal Communication; Devi, 2014, Personal Communication).

Athletes have called OGQ team with urgent requests at odd hours and the team has immediately acted upon the requirements (Desai, 2014, Personal Communication; Devi, 2014, Personal Communication). This response and support of OGQ builds up the trust of athletes in OGQ and engage them at emotional level. Often the athletes call up OGQ even before they call their families in need of some support (Tandon, 2014, Personal Communication; Devi, 2014, Personal Communication).

The support response structure (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2013; Clumpner, 1994) and open communication environment (Pensgaard and Roberts, 2002; Gould, Dieffenbach and Moffett, 2002) build by OGQ are critical to the athletic success at elite level. The faith of athletes, in the functioning and support system of the organization, helps the athletes to focus on their athletic goals.

## **6.2 Excellence in NFP functioning**

### **6.2.1 Legitimacy**

OGQ has invested proactively in creating legitimacy for the organization and the cause. This has been done at multiple levels. This legitimacy results from the credibility of purpose and credibility of people in OGQ (Sethi, 2013, Personal Communication). The organization has been able to establish the credibility of people, as the foundation of OGQ is led by two champions of sports, Geet Sethi and Prakash Padukone, who have excelled in their field at the world stage. Also, through the "support of a very credible Board of Directors, consisting of eminent people from sports and corporate", OGQ has maintained its credibility in the eyes of its stakeholders (Tandon, 2014, Personal Communication)

The poor performance of India in Olympics compared to the smaller countries has been associated with national shame (Bajpai, 2012). Therefore OGQ presents a legitimate cause of winning Olympic medal; as Geet explains "one medal can lift the worth of the entire nation" (Sethi, 2012). Another element of legitimacy comes from the fact that OGQ supports some of the well-known names in Indian sports (Rasquinha, 2013, Personal Communication). This

gives confidence to the donors that the money is spent for the right cause and on right people. The literature on NFP has also highlighted the importance of legitimacy for NFP organizations (Shilbury, 2001; Sargeant and Lee, 2004; Ridder and McCandless, 2010). This supports OGQ's efforts to establish its legitimacy in multiple ways.

### **6.2.2 Identifying and managing Beneficiaries**

OGQ solicits funds to support its athletes, to enable and empower them towards their goal of winning Olympic medals. Therefore, OGQ has to concentrate its efforts towards selecting the right beneficiaries (athletes) who have the potential to accomplish this goal. Towards this, OGQ has established a rigorous system to identify the right athletes, who are provided with the right support to compete at Olympic level. The ecosystem developed by OGQ, has experts from various fields, for identifying the potential talent. It monitors, reviews and audits the performance of selected athletes, and in cases of inconsistent performance OGQ withdraws its support. The rigorous system maintains that the benefit of support is going to the deserving candidate.

The literature suggests in the environment of limited funds the organization has to work on selection of deserving beneficiaries for optimal resource design for the cause (Besley and Coate, 1992). NFPs have to make the critical decisions regarding selection of right people to support (John, 2003). From a NFP perspective, OGQ has been successful in identifying and managing the right beneficiaries that has resulted in the greater support.

### **6.2.3 Transparency**

OGQ regularly communicates with the stakeholders through newsletters and annual reports which highlights the achievement of the athletes at various events and updates on other activities. The annual report provides details of OGQ's support to each athlete and for every expenditure on equipment, travel, foreign exposure, medical expenses etc. This reinforces the transparency of OGQ as it displays that the funds raised through donations are used only for training and preparation of athletes and all the overheads, including the administrative and other expenses, are kept at minimum. The directors proactively communicate and often make public announcements "Come and support us! The money is going in the right direction. It's going directly to the athletes" Geet Sethi (2013).

The literature on NFPs has also placed emphasis on transparency as an important attribute of NFPs. It is known that transparency is essential for organizations that work with limited resources and are dependent on donors (Sargeant and Lee, 2004). NFP organizations need to imbibe these characteristics to attract adequate funds for their functioning (Dixon, 1996; Ridder and McCandless, 2010). Also, statements by the credible spokespersons of such organizations emphasize transparency, which gives confidence to the donors that the money is spent for the right cause (Sargeant and Lee, 2004). The evidence from the case and the literature supports that creating transparency has been an important component of the success of OGQ as a NFP.

### **6.2.4 Marketing**

Marketing is a critical component of OGQ, not only to generate funds but also to convert OGQ's cause, of Olympic Gold, into a national movement (Rasquinha, 2013, Personal Communication; Sethi, 2013, Personal Communication; Khanna, 2014, Personal Communication). OGQ has dedicated people to handle its marketing matters and, digital and



external communication. The marketing tools are effectively applied by OGQ through a unique positioning, created around the performance at Olympics, which also comes out in its brand elements. The organization has Olympics in its name and the cause (Olympic Gold Quest, striving for success at Olympics). The logo a 'yellow circle' represents an Olympic Gold. There is a conscious effort by OGQ to create associations with Olympics and to remove any ambiguity about the ultimate goal.

OGQ's tag line is "It takes just 6 gms of Gold to lift the worth of a nation. Come Join US in our quest for GOLD!" Through this statement it plays on the emotions of people, that is, the feeling of nationalism and the pride in winning Olympic medals. This helps OGQ to connect with its core supporters, the people who attach personal importance to winning Olympic medals.

OGQ, specifically targets three segments, High Net-worth Individuals (HNIs), corporate leaders and non-HNIs or common citizens. An attribute common to the donors from the three segments is that they have an interest in sports and also tend to have nationalistic feelings. However, they differ in the amount that they donate, the number of donors in each segment, and the way OGQ approaches them. The number of donors from corporate leaders and HNI segment is low but they give large donations and contribute about 95% of total revenues for OGQ (Khanna, 2014). They are approached through the network and goodwill of OGQ directors. Non-HNIs are a large group but are expensive to reach, as they are geographically dispersed, also their donation size is small. OGQ uses internet and social media to reach out to this segment and the donations are channelled through online transactions. OGQ is also planning to target the large Indian diaspora scattered across various countries. These people tend to be affluent, passionate about Indian sporting success and have an intention to support Indian sports (Rasquinha, 2014).

OGQ has effectively leveraged digital and social media to build awareness, engages fans and solicits funds. It engages with the community of sports fans through interesting posts about athletes and OGQ, personal information of the famous athletes, updates on their performances etc. It has a large presence on social media on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and on blogs. All these platforms and the OGQ website are professionally managed by another agency. To get people to donate, OGQ uses imageries in its communication with affective content of nationalism and passion for sports.

The marketing strategies adopted by OGQ has been successful in translating its efforts to the donors and funders through integrated brand communication and targeted segmentation. The consistency and focus of their message, translates into a strong brand image, which in-turn has a positive impact on generating funds (Tapp, 1996, p. 335; Dixon, 1996; Kennedy, 1998; Grounds and Harkness, 1998). Also, the unique positioning is advantageous for OGQ as a NFP organization (Sargeant and Lee, 2004). Literature suggests that identification of donors with motivation to donate (Maynard, 2008), their segmentation based on giving behaviour (Padanyi and Gainer, 2004; Andreasen and Kotler, 2008) and designing the right messages (Shavitt, 1990) increases the persuasive appeal of communication towards donating for the cause (Pope et al., 2009). The continuous engagement of OGQ with current and prospective donors through social and digital media also facilitates the dissemination of information about the cause and serves as a communication aid to raise funds, improve relationships, increase their advocacy efforts, and keep publics well-informed about their activities (Hart, 2002;

Waters, 2003). Marketing is a key element of OGQ's success in spreading the cause and generating donations. The literature underscores the importance of different elements related to marketing and the evidence from the case supports that a rigorous marketing plan is the cornerstone of OGQ's success.

## 7. Conclusion

The findings from this research analysis show that OGQ has successfully integrated elements related to sports development and that of an effective NFP organization. These enable OGQ to support athletes at elite competitions like Olympics, through funds solicited from donors. The factors that have resulted in OGQ's success in sports domain are imbibed in its process of identifying, training, monitoring and providing holistic support to athletes. OGQ has adopted a stringent selection process to identify the athletes, competent at the elite level. OGQ adopts a focus strategy and concentrates on specific sports and inputs. OGQ's success also emanates from its ability to bring diverse expertise under one roof and creating a structure which has a fast response system.

OGQ has also imbibed essential attributes of a successful NFP in its ecosystem. It has consciously chosen people with high credibility in sports and corporate fields. It has built the legitimacy of the cause that brings sports rewards to the country. It is transparent in its working and actively shares information with different stakeholders. OGQ works towards identifying and managing the right beneficiaries (athletes) to optimize the limited resources. From a marketing perspective, OGQ has been able to successfully segment, target and position OGQ to its audience. It leverages diverse marketing tools such as social media, online communication and public relations to reach out to its audience.

The paper contributes to the literature on sports development at elite level and on Not-for-Profits. The success achieved by OGQ in international competitions and its success at generating funds can be a learning to other such organizations. The success of OGQ model, suggests that such a model can be applied in other emerging countries where government resources are constrained.

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<sup>i</sup> They have excelled in their respective sports. Geet is a former multiple times Billiards World Champion and Prakash is the winner of All England Open the most prestigious Badminton tournament.

<sup>ii</sup> Australian Sport | the pathway to success by Australian Government (2010), copyright Commonwealth of Australia 2010, Available at [http://www.ausport.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/372992/Australian\\_Sport\\_the\\_pathway\\_to\\_success.pdf](http://www.ausport.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/372992/Australian_Sport_the_pathway_to_success.pdf), (accessed 18 August 2014)

<sup>iii</sup> Australian Sports Commission Annual Report (2008-09), available at [http://www.ausport.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/334258/Australian\\_Sports\\_Commission\\_Financial\\_Report\\_08-09.pdf](http://www.ausport.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/334258/Australian_Sports_Commission_Financial_Report_08-09.pdf). (assessed 18 September, 2014)

<sup>iv</sup> United States Olympic Committee Annual report (2012), available at [https://www.teamusa.org/~/media/TeamUSA/Documents/Financial%202012%2520USOC%2520Annual%2520Report.pdf&ei=PAQcVLLtAsPHuASa0IDQCw&usq=AFQjCNhcWW3\\_L9IMX5Mmg3gV15AOxXYDCA&sig2=0CtkBHz3hwVN6FMmXbtS9w&bvm=bv.75774317,d.c2E](https://www.teamusa.org/~/media/TeamUSA/Documents/Financial%202012%2520USOC%2520Annual%2520Report.pdf&ei=PAQcVLLtAsPHuASa0IDQCw&usq=AFQjCNhcWW3_L9IMX5Mmg3gV15AOxXYDCA&sig2=0CtkBHz3hwVN6FMmXbtS9w&bvm=bv.75774317,d.c2E), (assessed 18 September, 2014)

<sup>v</sup> KPMG report, (2014), "Business of Sports: Shaping a Successful Innings for the Indian Sports Industry, released at the "SCORECARD 2014 – National Conference on Business of Sports" organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry, available at <http://www.kpmg.com/IN/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Documents/Business-of-Sports.pdf>, (assessed 18 September, 2014)

<sup>vi</sup> OGQ defines Top X as top few. The number 'X' differs across sports and depends upon the competitiveness in that sport among the top athletes. In some sports this might mean top 10, while in others where even those who are in top 20 have a fair chance to win the medal this may mean that OGQ looks at Top 20 athletes.

<sup>vii</sup> Conversion rate (1US\$ = 60 Indian Rupees)

<sup>viii</sup> Available at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-01-20/news/30647171\\_1\\_cii-plans-corporate-involvement-olympic-gold-quest](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-01-20/news/30647171_1_cii-plans-corporate-involvement-olympic-gold-quest), accessed on 5 May, 2014