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**RS1,200 CRORE**

# Cricket ad revenues to hit a six this year

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MUMBAI

Here's a pop quiz: Which business will generate in 2009 a little over double the revenue it did in 2008?

The answer, as evident from the picture accompanying this story: Cricket telecasts.

Thus, while a packed calendar from September means good news for cricket junkies currently getting high on the Ashes, broadcasters are licking their lips at the prospect of getting a juicy slice of the between Rs400 crore and Rs650 crore of advertising cricket telecasts

are expected to attract in the same period.

In the entire year, according to Shashi Sinha, chief executive (CEO) of media buying agency Lodestar Universal Pvt. Ltd, cricket telecasts will attract ad revenue of around Rs1,200 crore. The number has never crossed Rs500 crore in previous years, said Sinha.

Some broadcasters are looking to sign lucrative sponsorship deals for telecasts. Neo Sports Broadcast Pvt. Ltd could announce a sponsorship deal with Tata Docomo, the new GSM (a cellular technology

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KIRSTY WIGLESWORTH/AP

**Netting advertisers:** *The third cricket Test match of the Ashes series. Cricket channels' gain could be general entertainment channels' loss.*

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platform) service from the Tata group, according to a media buyer and an executive at the channel, both of whom did not want to be identified. Abhishek Verma, marketing and communications head of Neo Sports, declined comment, as did a spokesperson for Tata Docomo.

Despite the slowdown in the economy, the second edition of the Twenty20 league organized by India's cricket board, the Indian Premier League (IPL), earned around Rs400 crore in television advertising for broadcaster **Multiscreen Media Pvt. Ltd.** The average viewership rating for IPL matches was around 4, high enough to attract advertisers.

That's around the same viewership both the tri-series (India-New Zealand-Sri Lanka) and the Champions Trophy could attract, said a media buyer. According to Ajit Varghese, managing director of **Maxus**, a media buying agency which is part of **WPP Group Plc.**'s media specialist company **GroupM India Pvt. Ltd.**, the viewership could be between 4 and 5 depending on the performance of the Indian team. Varghese is particularly bullish on the ability of the Champions Trophy to attract advertisers and audiences because it will see the participation of the top eight cricketing nations and is similar to a mini World Cup. He is not as bullish about the Champions League, a new

JAM-PACKED	
Upcoming cricketing events.	
8-14 Sep	Channel
India-New Zealand-Sri Lanka tri-series	Ten Sports
22 Sep-5 Oct	Channel
Champions Trophy	ESPN Star Sports
8-23 Oct	Channel
Champions League Twenty20	ESPN Star Sports
25 Oct-11 Nov	Channel
India-Australia ODI series	Neo Sports
Nov-Dec	Channel
India-Sri Lanka ODI and Test series	Neo Sports

ODI: one-day International Source: Channel websites  
SANDEEP BHATNAGAR/MINT

concept where the top two teams from the Twenty20 leagues of several countries will face off.

But Sejal Shah, vice-president of **India Media Exchange**, the media buying arm of **Publicis Groupe**, is convinced that the Champions League will find enough takers, given the hype around IPL. "After that, the next best bet would be the Champions Trophy." She expected ratings for both events to cross 4.

And Sanjoy Chakrabarty, chief operating officer of **Dentsu Communications Pvt. Ltd.**, said the tri-series would garner television rating points of 2 or 3, while a big-ticket event such as the Champions League or Champions Trophy should

score at least 4-5.

These numbers have helped boost ad rates. Lodestar's Sinha said she is buying cricket advertising for almost double last year's rates (Rs3 lakh for 10 seconds as opposed to Rs1.5-2 lakh).

Sanjay Kailash, executive vice-president (advertising sales and new media) at **ESPN Software (India) Pvt. Ltd.**, said that spots during the telecast of Champions League matches are selling for at least Rs2 lakh for 10 seconds while those for the Champions Trophy are going for at least Rs3 lakh. "We have already signed up four sponsors for Champions Trophy and three more for Champions League that we will be announcing in the coming days."

The CEO of a media buying firm who did not want to be identified, said that Ten Sports' ad rates for the tri-series are anywhere between Rs1 lakh and Rs1.5 lakh for a 10-second spot, though Rukin Kizilbash, general manager of **Taj Television India Pvt. Ltd.** that owns Ten Sports, declined comment.

And the head of another media buying firm, who too declined to be identified, said Neo Sports is trying to sell ad inventory at Rs3-4 lakh for a 10-second spot.

General entertainment channels could be the losers in the bargain, said Maxus' Varghese. "But it's also up to sports channels to see that they don't ask for the impossible from advertisers and buyers."