

AUDIENCE AT SPORTS COMPETITIONS AS PREDICTOR OF EFFECTIVE SPORT MARKETING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Audience at sports competitions comprise of all persons within the sports venues (stadia) with an objective to watch, cheer or support the players (active participants), was hypothesized to be a predictor of effective sport marketing that could help to boost the economic development in Nigeria. The target population comprising of all employed coaches, athletes, sports psychologists, sports journalists, workers in corporate and private organizations, educational institutions and departments in the study areas in Nigeria involved in educating persons in sports disciplines was studied using the ex-post facto research design. The purposive multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 674 respondents from the target population. A self structured 47-item questionnaire whose construct validity was ascertained using the factor analysis and reliability index of 0.87 at $P < 0.05$ determined with the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha was the instrument used. Multiple regression analysis of the data generated revealed that audience at sports competitions is indeed a predictor of effective sport marketing in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Sport Market Sector, Sports Development Policy, Economic Development, Sport Market Mix, Sport Product.*

INTRODUCTION

Sports are institutionalized competitive activities that involve rigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills by participants motivated by personal enjoyment and external rewards (Coakley, 2001). Morakinyo and Aluko (2009) note that sports development in Nigeria has undergone a lot of changes from the colonial pre-independent to the independent era while it has presently attained a status of an economic and profit oriented venture. Kienka (1990) notes that Nigeria governments' monetary commitments towards the organization and administration of sports have been very high. Ajiduah (2001) however notes that despite these commitments, sport development in Nigeria is still a failed venture while Akarah (2007) observes that the returns to government in terms of profit have not been commensurate to Nigeria governments' monetary commitments.

Managing sport has thus become a true replica of what obtains in the larger society (managing business enterprises and ventures) hence everybody seems to develop and have interest for sports for social value, economic gains and its contribution to health and longevity while the interest of government in sports borders on unity, self reliance, image laundering and politics (Aiyejuyo and Ayoade, 2002).

Van (2003) notes that the sport industry can be a major contributor to Africa's economic development. Ogunmola (2002) also states that sports play an important role in stabilizing the economy of a nation and notes that in Nigeria, soccer commands unquestionably the greatest share of popular interest with all the financial and economic ramifications which that implies. The innumerable stadia, the throng of spectators, the number of players, officials and service personnel, equipment and uniforms, maintenance of fields and buildings, transportation, meals and lodging for players and even fans-all can add up to a business involving millions and billions of Naira. Akarah (2007, 2009), however, notes that this trend has not been attainable in Nigeria as, the Nigeria government is the sole proprietor and financier of sports and as such, there is low competition in the aspect of marketing sport as a product, especially in relation to the sport market mix using the four Ps (product, price, promotion and place) and, the attendant competition that would arise if other stakeholders were to be involved in funding and organizing sports.

Fasan (2004) espouses that the development of sports in Nigeria can only be attained when a strong financial base exists to execute programmes, develop athletes and build facilities. He thus concluded that, the greatest financier of sports in Africa is the government. Akarah (2007) notes that, it is a well known fact that most existing stadia in Nigeria are owned by federal or state governments. This apparently, has led to poor development and maintenance of the available facilities which consequently, also affects the growth, development and administration of sports which may not create a healthy environment for effective sport marketing. In this regard, Akarah (2009, 2010) states that for an effective sport marketing to be attained, the Nigeria government should hands off the funding and administration of the sports sector and instead, play supervisory roles by establishing and implementing the policies which will govern the organization of sports as a private sector.

Van, A. and Van, R. (1992) note that sport marketing comprises of activities of consumers and industrial products and service marketers who were increasingly using sport as a promotional vehicle for their (non-sports related) products or services. In essence, this becomes the marketing of a company's image or products/services through sports. Pitts and Stotlar (2002) define sport marketing as the process of designing and implementing activities for the production, pricing, promotion and distribution of a sport product or sport business product to satisfy the needs or desires of consumers and to achieve the company's objectives. Akarah's (2007) research findings indicate

that an effective sport marketing strategy if put in place in Nigeria would make monetary contributions which would boost the economy of Nigeria. This perhaps could be the basis upon which Chalip and Leyns (2002) observed that in recent times, an array of cities throughout the world have incorporated sporting events into their economic development mix.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1997) reports on Vision 2010 highlighted that, Nigeria's vast potentials in organized sports which is still largely undeveloped is not unconnected with the poor and declining state of sports infrastructure and facilities, poor funding and administration problems. The role of the place (stadia) which is the market as one of the four Ps (product, price, promotion, place) in the sport market mix need not be over-emphasized in this regard as, it is the conglomeration point of the audience for the consumption of the product (sport). The place (stadia), is apparently the fulcrum in the sport market mix as, it is where the exchange process occurs and the base for revenue generation (Akarah, 2007).

The question that this study sought to answer was if the audience at sports competitions would predict effective sport marketing in Nigeria. The purpose of this study was to ascertain if the audience at sports competitions would be a predictor of effective sport marketing in Nigeria with a view to determining plausible ways through which there can be an effective sport marketing so as to help generate awareness on the need to use sports as an avenue of creating a more robust economy for Nigeria. More specifically, the objective was to: Ascertain if the audience at sports competitions would be a predictor of effective sport marketing in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research method of the ex-post facto design was adopted for this study and was carried out in six states selected from the six geo-political zones namely; Delta, Lagos, Enugu, Kaduna, Borno, Niger and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). An estimated target population of 3,372 persons comprising of respondents from corporate and private organizations workers, sports journalists, sports psychologists, coaches and athletes, sports directors, coaches and athletes in universities (sourced from the Ministry of Sports in the study areas in 2007) from which a sample size of 674 made up of 44 coaches, 295 athletes, 11 sports psychologists, 44 sports journalists, 84 corporate organization workers, 84 private organization workers and 112 respondents from educational institutions was used for the study. The respondents in corporate and private organizations (General Manager, Assistant General Manager, Marketing/Business Manager and Head of Operations) as well as the Director of sports in the educational institutions were purposively sampled while coaches, athletes, sports psychologists, sports journalists and the other respondents in educational institutions were selected using the simple random sampling method of balloting.

The study employed a self structured 47-item questionnaire rated on a 4 point Likert type scale and extracted using the factor analysis was used to establish the construct validity whose reliability was established at 0.87 using the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha on a pre-tested sample of 30 sports stakeholders in Edo State. The face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained by experts in educational research and statistics, and other experts in physical education. The data collected was analysed using multiple regression analysis to verify the hypothesis formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Multiple regression analysis of viewing population of sports and effective sport marketing.

Model	R	R ²	R ² Adjusted	Std. Error of the Estimate
2	.30	.09	.09	.52204
<i>ANOVA</i>	df	ss	ms	F
Regression	2	17.64	8.82	32.36**
Residual	671	182.86	.27	
	Unstd Coef.		Std Coef	
Constant	B	SEB	B	t
Audience at Sports competitions	3.05	.14		21.58**
	.21	.03	.23	6.01**

N/B: B= Regression Coefficient, SE= Standard Error of B, **=Sig: 2-tailed

Stad Coef = Standardized Coefficient, Unstd Coeff = Unstandardized Coefficient

The table contains the correlations, regression coefficients and Beta-standardized regression coefficients between the audience at sports competitions and effective sport marketing. The results indicate that there was significant association between the audience at sports competitions and effective sport marketing, which accounted for 10% of audience at sports competitions variance in sport marketing. Therefore the hypothesis which states that the audience at sports competitions would not significantly predict effective sport marketing in Nigeria was rejected.

Hence, the findings indicate that the audience at sports competitions would predict effective sport marketing in Nigeria. From the findings obtained in the table, the study has shown that the audience at sports competitions would significantly predict effective sport marketing. The audience at sports competitions is comprised of all persons within the sports venues (stadia) with an objective to watch, cheer or support the players (active participants). The audience is part of the revenue generating unit for the sport marketer as, the proceeds from gate takings, sales of confectionaries all add up to generating part of the marketers' revenue. Wann Melnick, Rusell and Pease (2001) identify the following eight core motives as being reasons why people would attend sport events; diversion from everyday life, entertainment value, self-esteem enhancement, economic gain, aesthetic value, need for affiliation and family ties. Perhaps, it is in this regard that Adedipe (2005) supported this view when

he reported that fans in their hundred trooped to the National Stadium to catch a glimpse of a basketball contest which took place between August 6 and 10, 2006. This was adduced to the long time absence of organized sports contests.

John (2007) noted that in Nigeria, the big headache football and indeed every other sport in the country has presently is spectators apathy to the local stadiums which apparently are solely government owned and underdeveloped. This, he attributed to spectators withdrawal from the stadium since 1992 when satellite communication came into the homes of ordinary Nigerians. Through this means, they were now able to see pictures of well packaged matches in Europe and other places in the world where such pictures exposed the poor side of the local matches in the areas of bad pitches, lack of technical depth of club handlers, very terrible officiating, lack of seriousness amongst players and so on which consequently led to spectators withdrawal from the stadiums because there was nothing to cheer anymore. Similarly, sports journalists equally retreated to their offices with the coming of the internet, with the intent to download stories and pictures of foreign events and publish on their papers rather than spare effort to search for stories on the streets.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It will be apt to observe that the average Nigerian has a positive inclination towards sports and participating in it either as recreation, competitor or spectator (Akarah, 2010). It is also a fact that there is awareness to some extent of sport marketing because corporate and private organizations as well as individuals have over the years used sports as a medium of advertising their goods and services through sponsoring these activities (Akarah, 2010). Government on the other hand could allow the sport producers take charge of the sports sector like it has done through its reforms in some of the other sectors and establish the policies governing the sports sector as well as specifying the roles expected of the producers, as well as the taxes and tariffs that the producers/marketers are expected to pay.

In this regard, government no longer expends money on the sports sector but instead makes profit from it. Akarah (2010) also notes that, if sport as a product were to be assessible, it would create an environment that would attract the audience thereby enabling government to generate revenue that would boost the Nigeria economy and assist in the attainment of the vision 20:2020 plan which seeks to place Nigeria among the first twenty economies in the world by the year 2020. The Nigerian Government should establish and implement policies that will govern the organization of sports and allow the private sector (Corporate, private organizations and individuals) to invest in the sport market by building stadia and organizing sport competitions. This, no doubt would attract spectators and increase the audience at sports events thereby boosting the sport market sector.

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