

Mass Media Contributions to Sports Development in Delta State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the contributions of mass media to sports development in Delta State, Nigeria. The study adopts the survey method and a questionnaire to obtain data. The population comprises all the sports journalists and staff of the Delta State Sports Commission, Asaba. Seventy (70) respondents form the sample. The study is anchored on the Agenda-Setting Theory of the mass media and News Framing Theory. Findings show that mass media coverage of sports has led to the provision of modern sports facilities in areas that were lacking, encouraged sports participation, raised public consciousness and awareness about sports, and created publicity for sporting events in Delta State, among others. Based on these findings, the study concludes that through their continuous coverage and reportage of sports, the mass media impact sports development in the state. Consequently, the study recommends, among others, that the mass media should intensify its coverage of sports and collaborate with major stakeholders in the state to take sports to greater heights.

Keywords: *Mass Media, Contribution, Sports, Sports Development*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world, there is no denying the fact that almost everyone is dealing with the phenomenon of sport. Sport has become very crucial in virtually everything we do. People are either footballers, athletes, or sports fans, who deliberately follow news of sport and materials in the mass media, including radio, television, newspapers, magazines, or, of late, the internet, which has added to the scope of media coverage of sports (Tevakolli et al. 2013; Edim et al, 2016).

Mass media is crucial for sports development by increasing awareness, participation, and funding through media coverage. It informs the public, develops a

following for athletes, footballers, and teams, promotes healthy lifestyles, and attracts sponsorships by presenting sports events in an entertaining and accessible way. Ultimately, it significantly enhances the commercial and recreational value of sports.

Considering the effect of sports on different dimensions of personal and social life, the importance of its development at the national scale, and the mediatory role of media in this regard, it is essential to identify the role of media in sports development and prepare appropriate plans for it. Any macro planning for effective uses of media functions in sports requires a deep identification of this area and an investigation of these functions in different axes of development in sports. The mass media of any country (whether developed or evolving), especially national mass media, need to leave traditional and sectional decision-making and move toward strategic planning in different axes and consider consistent national and organizational goals (Cianfrone and Zhang, 2006).

The mass media have an axial and undeniable role in meeting the need for development awareness through transferring information to the audience and exchanging thoughts. This makes it possible for people to know their surrounding world and make their important personal and social decisions based on clearer and more updated information, so that they can get familiar with their social responsibilities, especially for development. The second main responsibility of mass media is their leadership and guidance role. Mass media could play an effective, instructive and leading role in development, awakening public awareness by spreading novel ideas (Home 2005, Cianfrone and Zhang, 2006).

Media activities in sports are conducted to communicate and send messages from sports organizations or the media itself to the audience. Therefore, communication has a major role in transferring knowledge, skills, attitudes and information.

Statement of the Problem

Today, the mass media have increasingly found an influential domain in sports. The necessity of knowing the mass media and its role in distributing sports news and also the need for studying to find results in line with achieving this all-important issue, has provided a research field in this regard.

Sports development is a step towards national development. Due to affecting personal and social life, sports have attracted the attention of people and the government. Mass media has an important role of sports development, which influences the realization of most of sports development objectives. Sports are gradually becoming a profitable advertising and promotion tool under the influence of mass media. It has become an attractive economic activity for investors locally and internationally.

As one of the hubs of sports in Nigeria, Delta State is home to several media outlets that help to transmit sports news to the audience and fans. Since the mass media contribute to sports development, it is not clear how much of the media reportage of sports influences its development in the state, hence the need for the study.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the mass media's contribution to sports development in Delta State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To ascertain whether the mass media contribute to sport development in Delta State, Nigeria
2. To find out the type of sports development being witnessed in Delta State as a result of mass media coverage of sports.
3. To determine whether mass media reports have enhanced sports development in Delta State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following questions were posed to guide the study:

1. Do the mass media contribute to sports development in Delta State, Nigeria?
2. What type of sports development is being witnessed in Delta State as a result of mass media coverage of sports?
3. Do mass media reports enhance sports development in Delta State, Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

The Agenda-Setting theory of the mass media provided the framework for this study. However, News Framing Theory was also used to support the theoretical basis of the study. The basic idea of Agenda-Setting Theory is that the news media, by their display of news, have the power to structure public issues and can exert some influence on public consciousness, cognition, and behaviour. Livingstone (1992) noted that through control of the agenda, the mass media place some emphasis on news stories by size, placement, and frequency of appearance of stories. Writing about the agenda-setting power of the media, Baran (2012) pointed out that the agenda-setting power of the media resides in more than the amount of space or time devoted to a story and its placement in the broadcast or on the page. Also important, he said, is the fact that there is great consistency between media sources across all media in the choice and type of coverage they give an issue or event. This consistency and repetition signal to people the importance of the issue or event.

Another way the mass media could influence their target public is through news framing. Framing is one approach that seeks to understand the way the media influences the audience. Scheufele (1999) noted that mass media activity sets the frame of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events. Media framing research considers communication as a process that results from the interaction between media and recipients. But, rather than studying media effects on individuals, framing scholars (Scheufele, 1999 & Entman, 2007) seek to understand the dynamic of interaction between the story organization and presentation and the audiences' experiences, perceptions, and orientations.

The term "frame" has been used in many disciplines, from social psychology to political science. However, according to Grabeor (1994), the term "frame" was first coined by the social psychologist Bateson (1972) in his article "A Theory of Play and Fantasy." Bateson considered human communication a map of interaction and meaning that guides our intention by constructing the cognitive structures that we use to make sense of the world around us. Goffman (1974) later used the term, frame to describe the organization of social experiences to make sense of them. He defined frames as interpretive devices or schemas that individuals use to locate, perceive, identify, and label things together to make sense of them. McQuail (2010) added that framing is a way of giving some overall interaction to isolated items of fact. McQuail asserted that it is almost unavoidable for journalists to do this and, in so doing, to depart from pure objectivity and to introduce some unintended bias. According to him, information supplied to news media by sources often comes with a built-in frame that suits the purpose of the source and is likely to be purely objective.

In their submission on the way the media organize and present events and issues they cover, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) identified metaphors, catch-phrases, exemplars, depictions, and visual images, among others, as framing devices that condense information and offer a 'media package' of an issue. The most comprehensive empirical approach to framing is offered by Tankard (2010), who suggested a list of 11 framing mechanisms or focal points for identifying and measuring new frames. They are (a) headlines, (b) subheads, (c) photos, (d) photo captions, (e) lead, (f) source selections, (g) quote selection, (h) pull quotes, (i) logos, (j) statistics and charts, and (k) concluding statements and paragraphs.

News framing theory is similar to the agenda-setting theory. In fact, McCombs, Shaw and Weaver (1997) and Soderlund (2010) suggested that not only are agenda-setting and framing effects related, but framing is, in fact, an extension of agenda setting. They used the term second-level agenda setting to describe the impact of the salience of characteristics of media coverage on audiences' interpretation of these news stories. But while agenda-setting describes which issues will enter the public domain and how they

may later influence political judgment, Terkidsen and Schnell (1997) believed that the theory of framing holds that issues, in and of themselves, can be arranged or presented in multiple fashions and, as such, influence citizens' issue considerations and level of policy support.

The media, having set an agenda to discuss an issue that is of public importance, also ensure that they frame their news stories on the issues to elicit the kind of response they desire to have from their target audience. As Soblerlund (2010) puts it, the importance of media framing, of course, lies in its ability to influence the way in which various audiences come to gain an understanding of developing events. The way journalists usually frame newspaper stories on the government's programme of activities could influence the interpretations and meanings the members of the public would attach to the report of media on the issue.

Conceptual Clarification

Concept of Mass Media

Mass media simply refers to the interaction of communication taking place at a wider scale, encircling a vast population and a widespread territorial jurisdiction. Basically, the media is the disseminating medium of different types of news and information to the public at large through print and electronic sources. The media has been playing a vital role in the identification and the promotion of knowledge, information and understanding in a nation (Gulam, 2016). From the sociological perspectives, one can say that the media has become part and parcel of everyday life. With regards to this assertion, the Henley Centre has reported that people in the UK spend nine hours a day consuming media in its various forms, with television viewing occupying the equivalent of a day a week (Gulam, 2016).

As today's main information source, the mass media undoubtedly has the power to influence agenda-setting and public opinion formation in every society. They do this by deciding which topics and issues are covered and how they are reported. In many cases, those decisions are not primarily determined by journalistic criteria, but affected by several other factors (Rossier & Schenk, 2000).

In modern times, the mass media has become an integral part of human life. In today's world, where one's social circle is mostly work-related, based on some or other selfish motives, people tend to believe and depend more on the media for every type of information. Moreover, the mass media has become more powerful by disseminating information. Both the government and the people depend on the mass media not only for information dissemination but also in setting agenda for development. This crucial role, as Horrocks (2009) noted, has made the mass media to be tagged the interlocutor of the

world and humanity. According to Horrocks (2009), journalism works in society just like fluid in the body, the mass media in all its forms - print or electronic - are a mirror of the times and the society we live in.

Concept of Development

The word, 'development', implies growth or advancement in the life of a person or society. It is about man, and man is both the subject and recipient of development. Development is the total process of growth and improvement which involves growth in economic, social, political and cultural sector of a society (Anaeto & Anaeto, 2010). In looking at development, Amodu (2007) said it is the process of positive socio-economic change in the quality and level of human existence which is aimed at raising the standard of living, the quality of life and human dignity.

Oladipo (1996), cited in Soola (2003), described development in general as a process of economic and social advancement which enables people to realize their potentials, build self-confidence and lead lives of dignity and fulfillment. It is a process aimed at freeing people from evils of want, ignorance, social injustice and economic exploitation. In the same vein, Rogers (1976), cited in Wilson (2005), explained that development is a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment.

Development is concerned with the quality and quantity of life. Nuhi et al (1993) opined that quality of life refers to opportunities and availability of social, health and educational concerns. The quantity of life involves the amount of economic and political participation of the people. Todaro and Smith (2003) averred that development is conceived as a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty. Hence, development is improvement or growth achieved through some combination of social, economic and institutional processes that secure the means to obtain a better life.

Rodney (1972), cited in Okafor (2014), viewed development from the individual perspective, as an increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing. From the level of social group, he described development as an increased capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships, as according to him, much of human history has been a fight for survival against natural hazards and against real and imagined enemies. On the historical front, Rodney described "development" as the increase in the ability to guard against independence of the social groups and indeed to infringe upon the freedom of others;

something that often comes about irrespective of the will of the persons within the societies involved.

Todaro and Smith (2007) seem to agree with Rodney by identifying sustenance, self-esteem, and freedom as the three basic components or core values for understanding the inner meaning of development. Todaro and Smith identified some variables like improvement in income, output, and radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures, including popular attitudes, idiosyncrasies, customs, belief systems, norms and values, as indispensable components of development.

Soola (2003) submitted that development must be of the people, by the people and for the people. It must permeate the entire spectrum and strata of society, touching on the lives of the poorest of the poor, lifting them, as it were, from the abyss of poverty, ignorance, disease, squalor, human rights abuses and similar deprivations

Concept of Sports

The Council of Europe (2022) defines "sports in its Revised European Sports Charter as all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, are aimed at maintaining or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels. This broad definition encompasses play, recreation, indigenous sports, and games, in addition to competitive sports, recognizing the importance of sport for physical and mental development and social interaction.

The key components of the Council of Europe's definition are:

- Physical Activity: The core of the definition is "physical activity," emphasizing the body's movement.
- Participation: This activity can be either casual or organized.
- Motivation: The aims of participation include:
- Physical Fitness: Improving or maintaining physical condition.
- Mental well-being: Contributing to mental health.
- Social Relationships: Forming connections with others.
- Competition: Achieving results in sporting events at any level.

The scope and context of the definition include:

- Broad Application: The charter extends this definition to include play, recreation, and even indigenous sports and games, highlighting the wide scope of what constitutes sport.
- Framework for Policy: This definition serves as a guide for Council of Europe member states, helping them develop national legislation and policies to support sports.

- Focus on Development: The Council views sport as a vital factor in human development, promoting its integration into socio-cultural development through coordinated policies.

However, sports can be defined as organized, competitive physical activities or games that involve skill, physical prowess, and often serve as entertainment. They are typically governed by a set of rules or customs that serve to ensure fair competition and consistent adjudication of a winner. Sports can be played individually or in teams, and they often require specialized equipment and facilities. The primary purpose of sports is to improve, use, and maintain physical abilities and skills while providing enjoyment to participants and entertainment to spectators. Sports also play significant roles in cultural identity, social cohesion, and physical health maintenance across societies worldwide (White, 2025).

Sports differ from general play and recreation by several defining characteristics. First, sports typically involve competition, with individuals or teams striving to outperform opponents according to established metrics such as goals scored, time elapsed, or points earned. Second, sports are governed by codified rules that define the playing field, equipment, participant behaviour, and scoring systems. These rules ensure fairness and standardization across competitions (White, 2025).

History of Sports

The practice of sports dates back to prehistoric times, with evidence showing that competitive physical activities were present in human culture long before written records. Ancient civilizations incorporated sports into their cultural and religious practice. In ancient Egypt, sports like wrestling, javelin throwing, and swimming were popular, while ancient Greeks formalized athletic competitions through the Olympic Games, first recorded in 776 BCE.

During the middle ages, sports evolved with regional variations. Medieval tournaments featured jousting and archery, while commoners engaged in folk games that were precursors to modern sports like soccer and rugby. The Renaissance period saw a renewed interest in physical education and competitive games as part of a well-rounded human development.

Types of Sports

Sports can be categorized in numerous ways, including by the type of physical activity involved, the number of participants, or the environment in which they are played. Team sports require coordination among multiple players working toward a common goal. Examples include:

- Soccer (football): It is the most popular sport with an estimated 3.5 billion fans.
- Basketball: It is played by two teams of five players on a rectangular court.
- Cricket: It is particularly popular in Commonwealth countries
- Volleyball: It is played on a divided court with teams trying to ground the ball on the opponent's side.

Social and Cultural Impact of Sports

Sports transcend mere physical activity to become powerful cultural institutions with far-reaching social impacts. They often serve as vehicles for national identity and pride, particularly during international competitions like the World Cup or Olympic Games, where athletes represent their countries.

Sports can also function as social equalizers, providing opportunities for individuals regardless of socioeconomic background. Many professional athletes have risen from disadvantaged circumstances through their sporting talents. Sports participation teaches valuable life skills, including teamwork, discipline, leadership, and resilience, which transfer to other areas of life.

Mass media contributions to sports development include the following:

- i. It increases awareness and participation: Media coverage helps people learn about sports, follow athletes, footballers and teams, and encourages them to participate themselves.
- ii. It generates revenue and funding: By making sports more popular, the media creates opportunities for increased sponsorship and advertising, which provides funding for sports development, facilities, and personnel.
- iii. It promotes positive values: Media can be used to educate the public on issues like sportsmanship, fair play, and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle while also discouraging negative practices like drug use in sports.
- iv. It develops talent: Media can help identify and promote young talent, raising their profile and encouraging further development.
- v. It structures Sports: Media needs can influence the structure of sports themselves. A classic example is how media owner Kerry Packer's need for a shorter, more exciting game to attract prime-time viewers led to the development of one-day cricket.

The challenges and limitations of media coverage of sports include the following:

- i. Funding and resources: Media outlets may lack the funding to cover all sports events, particularly at the local or national level, leading to uneven coverage.

- ii. Focus on popular sports: The media often concentrate on a few dominant sports, like football, because they are more likely to attract sponsorship and large audiences, potentially neglecting other sports.
- iii. Logistical challenges: Issues like inconsistent electricity supply can hinder media coverage of events.

Sports and Mass Media

Sports and Radio

Up to the early 20th century, the only way to share the immediate drama of a sports event was either to play or to attend. But then came on the radio. Live radio reporting gave the impression of being there, of being a witness to something emotional and full of suspense. Announcers have learned quality to give the impression of dense and dramatic events. Another advantage of radio was and still is its very fast speed. Results and scores can be diffused or relayed instantaneously in very flexible programme and the radio medium can reach people at any time anywhere, i.e, in the car, at the work place, on beach, etc.

Live reporting on the radio can increase the number of people who could follow a sports event at the same time. It has brought immense popularity to most sporting events. Even if it has to compete with television, radio remains an important medium for sports news today, both in urban and rural areas. Even with the televising of most sporting events, radio is still very useful as it can provide results from these contests instantaneously. Furthermore, radio sets are small and portable and can be used in places where watching Television is impossible. Finally, radio can be used as a supplement to television reporting.

Sports and Television

Television has clearly become the leading medium in sports contest like the radio. It allows live reporting, but because it transmits not only sound but also live images, the feeling of being there is even stronger for television spectators than for radio listeners, so with television, major sporting contests are no longer available just to spectators witnessing the event in person, but also to many millions more who can view the spectacle in their own homes with the television sets they have. The added value of television is evident: close-up, replays, slow motion, the different angles from different cameras, and cameras that follow the action. It can be more exciting to be a spectator in front of the television screen than to be a spectator in the stadium, far away from the

playing field or the arena floor. And, what is more important, television shows live people, sportsmen and women, usually perfectly built, completely fit, attractive, and highly trained young people. The "communication triad, i.e. sports, media, and advertising, produces a highly marketable service, show business. Due to added values-stemming from dramatization, reporting skills, and broadcasting itself-televised sport has created a much different feel for sport than in the past (Oyedokun et al, 2021).

Sports and the Internet

Since in the mid-1990s, not only television but also the Internet can transmit live pictures of sports events. However, the memory capacity of personal computers and data transfer rates has set limits to this kind of sports broadcasting so far. Therefore television still remains the most important medium for sports reporting. But the Internet already offers the following interesting options for sports fans today.

- * Statistics, plans, and background information can be consulted without any problems because of the almost unlimited memory capacity of the World Wide Web. So the new media may be used as a sports encyclopedia.
- * The Internet is a platform on which footballers, athletes can present themselves. Almost all sports clubs and successful sportsmen have their own websites.
- * Finally, the Internet is an interactive medium, so sports fans can also act as web publishers. Some of them collect information about their idols and publish it on the web; others use discussion forms; and sometimes fans place their bets at online betting offices.

In all, it can be said that the internet has become a popular medium for sports fans, too. The Internet allows a fast worldwide transfer of vital data, so it is well-suited to the transmission of short sports news. Portal sites specialized in sports and the official websites maintained by organizers of sports events continuously report the latest news and results. These services are very popular, especially during big sports events like the World Cup and Olympics. The official websites of the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, and the 2002 Soccer World Cup in Japan and Korea registered billions of page views within a few weeks. Independent sports portal sites are also frequently used.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study adopted the survey research method. The questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Survey instruments can be used to investigate problems in social settings. Kerlinger (2000) opined that survey research is a useful scientific tool to employ when a researcher is interested in the attitudes and opinions of people, as well as the relationship of these attitudes to respondents' overt behaviour. Seventy (70) respondents constitute the sample size. This comprised 30 sports journalists who are members of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), Delta State chapter, and 40 key staffers of the Delta State Sports Commission, Asaba. The respondents were purposively selected. The data collected were analyzed based on each research question.

Table 1: Respondents' knowledge of Mass Media contribution to sports development in Delta State

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	70	100%
No	-	0%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field work 2025

Table 1 shows that all the respondents (70) agreed that the mass media contribute substantially to sports development in Delta State.

Table 2: Type of sports development being witnessed in Delta State as a result of mass media coverage of sports

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Provision of sports facilities	22	31.4%
Encourage sports participation	15	21.4%
Raise public consciousness and awareness about sports	17	24.3%
Create publicity for sporting events	16	22.9%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field work 2025

Table 2 shows the various sports development being witnessed in Delta State as a result of mass media coverage of sports: provision of sports facilities in all the stadia (31.4%), encourage sports participation (21.4%); raise public consciousness and awareness about sports (24.3%); create publicity for sporting events (22.9%).

Table 3: Media reports and enhanced sports development in Delta State

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Provide considerable knowledge about sports to audience and sports fans	22	31.4%
Ensure that competing teams play by rules of the game	20	28.6%
Ensure sports facilities are maintained and not allowed to deteriorate	15	21.4%
Create sports heroes	13	18.6%
Total	70	100%

Source: Field work 2025

Table 3 shows the various ways media reports about sports have enhanced sports development in Delta State: provide considerable knowledge about sports to audience and sports fans (31.4%), ensure that competing teams play by rules of the game (28.6%), ensure sports facilities are maintained and not allowed to deteriorate (2.4%) and create sports heroes (18.6%).

Summary of Findings

- The major findings that emerged from the study are as follows:
- * All the respondents acknowledged that the mass media contribute to sports development in Delta State.
 - * Mass media coverage of sports in Delta State has led to: provision of sports facilities, encouraging sports participation among the populace, raising public consciousness and awareness about sports, and create publicity for sporting events.
 - * Mass media reports provide considerable knowledge about sports to audience and sports fans, ensure that competing teams play by rules of the game, ensure sport facilities are maintained and not allowed to deteriorate, and create sports heroes.

The above findings are in tandem with the submissions of Gulam (2016), and Kumar (2022) that the mass media have promoted sports and paved the future direction for sport all over the world.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have revealed that the mass media contribute to the positive development of sports in Delta State. The mass media have been able to do this through their coverage and reportage of sports activities and events. Thus, the more the coverage

and critical analysis of events, the more positive the development of sports is being experienced in Delta State.

The findings, therefore, provide a basis for the conclusion that the mass media make a substantial contribution to sports development in Delta State. Through their continuous coverage and reportage of sports, the mass media impact on sports development.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study and the conclusion reached, the following recommendations are put forward:

- i. There is a need for the mass media to focus more attention on the coverage of sports (both outdoor and indoor) with a view to bringing sports news to the doorstep of the people who constantly yearn for them.
- ii. As the media intensifies its coverage of sports, there is also a need to collaborate with major stakeholders in the state to take sports to greater heights.
- iii. The mass media should continue to expose the inadequacies in sports facilities across the state so that the government can put them in good shape for the benefit of the users.
- iv. With the provision of the required modern sports facilities occasioned by media coverage and reportage of sports, it is hoped that the state will continue to attract attention for national and international sporting events.

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