

Sports Tourism as an Instrument for Nigeria's Development in the 21st Century: Challenges and Way Forward

Ifeanyichukwu Christian Elendu, Ph.D *

Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Faculty of Education,
University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

* E-mail of the corresponding author: elelifey2k@yahoo.com

Abstract

The paper x-rays sports tourism as an instrument for Nigeria's development in the 21st century. Some of the challenges to Nigeria's tapping of sports tourism for development were discussed. Sports are social events that make people to travel to cities, countries and continents of the world. Sports tourists temporarily leave and travel outside their homes staying at least 24 hours to either actively or passively participate in sporting events. Many countries have realized the economic importance of sports and tourism. Countries and cities bid to host mega sports events such as Olympics Games and World Cup. Sports tourism has both short-term and long-term benefits to the host city or country. Sports tourism is one of the non-oil sectors that contributes to the economic, social, political, infrastructural and cultural development of the host city. Sports tourism in Nigeria is marred due to security, infrastructural, corruption and sports management challenges. These challenges must be tackled if Nigeria is to benefit from the developmental potentials of sports tourism. Hence, necessary recommendations were made.

Key words: Mega, economic, social, political, infrastructure, culture.

1. Introduction

Sport is an important activity within tourism and tourism is a fundamental characteristic of sport (Hinch & Higham, 2001). Glasson, Godfrey and Godfrey (1995) noted that tourism has been argued to be the world's largest industry, accounting for about 5.5% of the world's Gross National Product and 6% of the employment. Tourism is a trillion dollar industry. Sport is a multi-billion dollar industry world wide and has become a dominant and defining force in the lives of millions of people globally (Martin, 2007). Sports and tourism are distinct but interrelated socio-cultural events and experiences of a society.

Travel is an ancient behaviour (Zauhar, 2004), and the spirit of travel has lived on down the ages (Kinnaird & Hill, 1993). Heath and Wall (1992) stated that man has traveled in search of new places, new lands, new cultures and new experiences. Participating in sporting events outside one's place of residence is one the reasons behind people's traveling behaviour. Sports unify and integrate people from different parts of the society who temporary leave their homes for active or passive participation in sports. Sports and tourism are institutions that could be used by any nation to achieve its economic developmental goals such as Vision 20-20-20 because of their economic power. Sports tourism refers to all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organized way for noncommercial or business/commercial reasons that necessitate travel away from home and work locality (Standeven & De Knop, 1999). In this paper, sports tourism is the temporary movement of active and passive sportsmen and sportswomen outside their homes for the purpose of active or passive participation in sporting events in a familiar or unfamiliar locality or environment.

Higham (1999) stated that sport events tourism can range greatly from professional sports such as football, soccer, baseball, basketball and hockey, to collegiate level and even high school level sporting events, and mega sporting events such as Olympics, the Super Bowl and World Cup Soccer. Sports-based travel has been a fulcrum for research among sports researchers especially sports sociologists over the past two decades. Traveling for the purpose of sports and sports-related activities could be traced to Ancient Olympic Games. People have been traveling or touring places leaving their residential homes for recreational or competitive sporting activity or event. Zauhar (2004) opined that people world-wide are participating more in sports and traveling to certain destinations for the pleasures and enjoyments of physical activities, amateur and/or professional. These sports tourists include athletes, coaches, fans, media personnel, technical crew personnel, peers, friends, spectators, parents, siblings, relatives, among others.

Sport tourism is a travel for non-commercial reasons to participate or observe sporting activities away from the home range (Hall, 1992). Tourists may decide to travel outside their homes for mega or small scale sport event tourism. Sinclair (1998) viewed tourists as temporary visitors who spend more than 24 hours in destinations other than their normal place of residence, whose journey is for the purpose of holiday-making, recreation, health, study, religion, sport, visiting family or friends, business or meetings. Sports tourism events could of mega sports events or small scale sports events.

Mega events are short term events with long term consequences (Roche, 1994). The long term developmental expectations (economic, political, social, cultural, infrastructural, etc) make cities and countries to strive to host mega sports events notwithstanding the associated cost of hosting such events. The mega sports events are sports competitions that pull international participants or people from other parts of the world into one's country. Mega sports events are sporting events with global interest and coverage. Such sports events are the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, World Championships, World Cup, among others. Most the sports events tourism has focus on the mega sporting events such as Olympic Games or World Cup (Gibson, 2002). Much focus on sports tourism in relation to mega sports events pushed researchers like Yusof, Omar-Fauzee, Shah and Geok (2009) to examine impact of sports tourism on small scale sports events. According to them, small scale sport events include regular season sporting competitions in a community such as soccer, rugby or ice hockey or adventure/outdoor events such as cyclethon or skiing.

Sport tourism, according to Zauhar (2004), involves visitations to state-of-the-art sport facilities and/or unique sport installations which generally house sports happenings, such as stadiums, arenas, bowls, domes; museums dedicated to sport heritage such as those at the Ancient Olympia in Greece; and sports heritage sites dedicated to founders, developers, special events such as the birthplace of the inventor of basketball; halls and walls of fame dedicated to and honouring particular sports heroes, leaders and organizers. Other visitations include colossal and unique sports facilities such as water slides, summer ski jumps, bungee jumping stations; sports theme parks such as Disney World of sports; sports shows and demonstrations such as Tall ships visitations, aquatic performance; and in other situations, some of the visitor attractions lead to participation usage and interactive involvement. Sports tourists travel distances to see present and past star athletes or winner teams.

Apart from mega sports events like Olympics Games and World Cup, regional sports competitions like All African Games attracts sports tourists from all parts of Africa especially Nigeria. Nigerians and foreigners still temporarily leave their residential homes to participate in national, regional, inter-state, inter-local, universities, colleges, polytechnics, secondary schools, and primary schools sports competition. In Nigeria, the National Sports Festival is now fast growing in terms sports tourism. Athletes, coaches, media, fans and spectators from different states of Nigeria leave their homes to participate in sports competitions. Rivers State has its own sports festival where sports participants from all the local governments in Rivers state leave their homes to participate in sports competition.

Institutional sports competitions provide avenues for sports tourism. Student-athletes and other sports participants in Nigerian universities leave their homes to participate in sports competition under the umbrella of Nigerian Universities Games Association (NUGA). Nigerian Polytechnics' sports participants tour to participate and compete in Nigerian Polytechnics Games Association (NIPOGA). Moreso, Nigerian Colleges of Education sports participants leave their homes to compete in sports under the umbrella of Nigerian Colleges of Education Games Association (NICEGA).

Football competitions are organized among Nigerian football clubs (Enyimba Football Club, Dolphins Football Club, Sharks Football Club, Kwara United Football Club, Sunshine Stars Football Club, etc) and some participants (players, coaches, fans, media personnel, spectators) temporarily leave their homes for the purpose of participation. The developmental opportunities of mega sports event tourism are enormous and supersede the small scale sports event tourism. Notwithstanding, both mega sports event tourism and small scale sports event tourism contributes to economic, social, cultural, infrastructural, and political development of the host community.

2. Sports Tourism and Economic Development

Sport events have become an important means for the economic development of local community, region or country and are no longer merely about organizing quality activities (Van den Berg, Braun & Otgaar, 2000). Tourism officials estimated that the 2003 cricket World Cup generated at least 1.2 billion rands for the South African economy (Hassen, 2003). Kurtzman (2005) listed employment, economic impact, and direct spending as the benefits of sport tourism on a community.

Mega sports tourism ensures high exchange and spending of foreign currencies in the sports host community. Accommodation providers such as hotels and guests houses witness higher customers and make more money during sports events especially the mega events such as World Cup. There is always higher demand for hotel rooms leading to increase in financial charges. Also, there is always higher sports products (sports shoes, sports T-shirts, balls, whistle, "vuvuzela", etc.) and non-sports products (food and drinks, mobile phones and accessories, beverages, satellites, electronics, video cameras, etc) buying and selling above normal buying and selling from both national and international sports tourists. The high buying and selling of these sports and non-sports products would not have taken place without sports participants leaving their homes to the sports venue or hosting community. The sale of gate tickets and reservation of spectator's sits for high dignitaries known as "Very Important Personality, (VIP)" are avenues which sports organizers make money from wealthy sports tourists. The aviation industry makes money from sports tourists especially international sports tourists who pay for their flight tickets. Sports tourism offers temporary and permanent employment and jobs to people, thereby adding to individual and national economic transformation. Spilling (1996) observed that there is evidence of new economic activity at a micro, entrepreneurial level within destinations hosting mega sporting events, creating self-employment in a manner that is imperceptible to standard economic employment indicators. Sports tourism exposes the investment potentials of a hosting city or country to local and foreign investors who may later come back to invest thereby increasing the nation's economy.

3. Sports Tourism and Social Development

Sport tourism contributes to high media coverage on a community, entertainment sites and profiles a city (Kurtzman, 2005). There is no nation that does not need other nations for its social, economic and political existence. Sport being a social event ensures that athletes, coaches, media personnel, fans and spectators meet and interact with their counterparts from other places. During sports event whether mega or small scale, people establish relationship with both national and international sports tourists. A social bond and relationship formed during the sports events may not be broken by the parties. Inter-personal relationship involving two individual from different socio-cultural backgrounds is established and maintained even after the sporting event. Individual can be visiting each other after the events. The individuals exchange addresses and items as a mark of friendship and love for each other. Cities and countries can form social links and interactions with each other during and after sports events which can be transferred to other facet of their lives. These individuals, cities and countries share ideas as friends.

4. Sports Tourism and Cultural Development

Mega sports events provide the opportunity to incorporate supporting events and attractions of social and cultural nature that promote the host country's capabilities, culture and traditions even further (Kim & Morrison, 2005). Many mega sporting events especially those that are "one off" rather than annual dates on circuit timetables develop strong cultural dimensions and the importance of these links to the development of culture and heritage in a community is widely recognized (Scott, 2004). Sports tourism strengthens the cultural heritage of the host community. Host communities of sports events utilize the occasion to showcase their culture and tradition. Glamour has been added to sports events with the exhibition of traditional foods and dishes, dressing, dances, and artifacts. Some sports participants usually dress in their cultural attires while engaging in traditional music and dances. At the opening and closing ceremony of the 17th National Sports Festival held in Rivers State on 3rd July and 10th July 2011 respectively, athletes from different states showcase their popular pattern of dressing. For example, Rivers State athletes (Team Rivers) wore the popular Ikwerre ethnic-nationality cultural attire of long sleeve and loose shirts known as "Etibo", hats, wrappers, blouses, and walking sticks. Other athletes from Niger-Delta and Southern States of Nigeria were identified with their cultural dresses. Athletes from Northern Nigeria were easily identified with their dressing. People visited notable places like the cultural museum in the sports hosting communities.

5. Sports Tourism and Infrastructural Development

Kurtzman (2005) stated that sport tourism contribute to infrastructural development in a community. During sports events especially mega sports events, infrastructures of international standard are provided for sports tourists, thereby increasing the status of infrastructure in the host city or country. Hosting any mega or even small scale sports competition always contribute to the construction of sports facilities, construction and maintenance of road networks, and construction of health facilities. Federation Internationale de Football Association requires that the World Cup host country provide at least 8 and preferably 10 modern stadia capable

of seating 40,000 to 60,000 spectators (Matheson & Baade, 2003). The power or electricity sector is always given attention to avoid embarrassment that may be caused by power failure during sports events. Accommodation facilities are constructed and provided. A country must ensure that it has an international airport and that the aircrafts are in good condition for foreign sports tourists before hosting a mega sports event. The airports must be of international standard. Generally, there are infrastructural legacies arising from sports event tourism.

6. Sports Tourism and Political Development

Sports contribute to politics just as politics contributes to sports. There is a relationship between sports and politics. Sports tourism contributes in strengthening a country's democracy by the coming together of Heads of States and their sharing of democratic ideas during sports events. Some Heads of states or their representatives attend mega sports events where they may exchange ideas on national issues affecting their countries. The Heads of States can in their sports tourism, discuss not only politics but social and economic matters that will contribute to the development of their countries. Sports event tourism especially the mega type improves the host city or country's image and reputation.

7. Challenges Facing Sports Tourism in Nigeria

The benefits accruing to a nation from sports tourism abound. Developing countries like Nigeria are faced with security, infrastructural, corruption and sports management challenges that deprived them from enjoying the developmental packages of sports tourism.

7.1 Security Challenge

Safety and security of lives and properties are needed in order to encourage tourism including sports tourism. Sports tourists value their lives and properties and cannot risk them to the security flaws of any nation. Threats to security of lives and properties are serious challenges facing Nigeria. The incessant bombing in the Northern part of the country is scaring that people live in fears. The Cases of kidnapping in southern Nigeria is serious that nobody will think of bidding and hosting mega sports events. The security threats are enough to disqualify any city or country's bid to host any sports event. Local sports tourists even find it difficult to travel and participate in sports events for the fear of either being kidnapped or consumed by bomb explosions at the sports venue. Insecurity has made many investors to flee back to their country or to another country to invest.

7.2 Infrastructural Challenge

The engagement and satisfaction of sports tourists on sports events in Nigeria have been marred by many infrastructural challenges. The epileptic power or electricity supply in Nigeria always interrupts the smooth organization of sports events. In order to avoid embarrassment as a result of power outage, most Nigerian homes resort to generators. Nigerians strive to secure electricity generating set even if it is a small one popularly known as "I pass my neighbour generator" to ensure they have electricity when they need it. Nigeria depends largely on standby generators even during sports events. Some sports tourists from developed countries that have steady power supply may find it difficult coming to Nigeria where the supply of electricity is not reliable. Poor road network is another problem that is capable of scaring sports tourists in Nigeria. Most Nigerian roads have been described as death traps rather than roads. The inadequacy or poor condition of sports facilities pose a great challenge to Nigeria in hosting mega sports events such as Olympics, hence affecting the possibility of most foreign sports tourists coming to Nigeria. There is now a shift from mere availability of sports facilities to the type or status of the sports facilities. Provision of world class sports facilities is pre-requisite to host mega sports events.

7.3 Corruption Challenge

Corruption is a social menace that has eaten deep into most Nigerians. Foreign investors find it difficult to invest in the country. Fraudsters have given Nigeria bad image that foreign sports tourists may find it difficult coming into the country for sports events. The fund meant for sports and infrastructural development are mismanaged and sometimes embezzled by Nigerians. Embezzlement of sports fund has left the country with little or no sports facilities, making it difficult to comfortable bid and host sports competitions for sport tourists to attend. Nigeria

cannot boast of world class sport facilities not because of lack of resources but due to corruption especially on the part of the political leaders who mismanage the resources.

7.4 Sports Management Challenge

The success of sports events depend on their management. Most sports programmes or events are not properly managed. This could not be far from the fact that non-professional are in sports leadership positions. When a sports programme is not properly managed and administered, it will not be interesting for sports tourists to attend and participate. Sports programmes do not receive the expected and needed media coverage to create awareness in Nigeria. The driving forces of sports events like sponsorship are yet to meet up with the practice in developed countries. Sometimes, poor officiating has made some potential sports tourists not to travel and participate in sports events in Nigeria.

8. Conclusion

Sports and tourism are two interrelated social institutions that contribute to the development of any nation. There is high mobility in sports and among sports participants. Sports have taken many people to cities, countries, and continents of the world as people travel far and near for the sake of sports. People temporarily leave and spend at least 24 hours outside their homes to participate in one event or the other. People travel for the sake of either actively or passively participating in sporting events. Mega and small scale sports tourism contribute to economic, social, cultural, infrastructural, and political development of the host city or country. However, there are fundamental challenges to sports tourism in Nigeria. The wave of sports tourism in Nigeria is slowed down because of security, infrastructural, corruption, and sports management challenges.

9. Recommendations

In order to ensure that Nigeria benefits from the developmental package of sports tourism, the following recommendations were made.

1. Federal government, state government, local government and all stakeholders in Nigeria should address security challenges such as bombings and explosions that are ravaging the country.
2. All levels of government, corporate bodies and philanthropists should assist in the provision of infrastructure such as good roads, electricity, sports facilities, among others. World class sports facilities should be provided to enable Nigeria bid and secure mega sports events.
3. The fight against corruption should be intensified by the government through its anti-graft agencies such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).
4. Only certified sports professionals with integrity should be saddled with the responsibility of sports management in Nigeria.

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