

Effect of Sports Sponsorship on Consumers Perception of Marketing in Delta State of Nigeria

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Abstract— Sports sponsorship has become a critical tool in advancing sports marketing globally, and in improving infrastructure, sports participation, and economic growth. Assessing its functionality in Delta State is necessary for an enhance improvement. This paper therefore, examines the extent sports sponsorship enhance consumers' perception of sports marketing in Delta State are suggests means of improving sports sponsorship in Delta State. To arrive at meaning conclusion or findings the study used descriptive research design. The research instrument used was a set of questionnaire administered to 100 respondents selected through single random sampling which consists of sports marketers, sports coaches, sports journalist and athletes in Delta State, Nigeria. The findings reveal a strong public perception of the benefits associated with sports sponsorships, particularly in terms of job creation, investment attraction, and infrastructure development. Respondents largely agree that increased sponsorship can lead to tangible economic benefits, positioning it as a critical component for fostering local development. Finally the study amongst others recommended that to foster partenership with reputable sponsors, enhance visibility and engagement, develop targeted sponsorship strategies.

Keywords: Sports Sponsorship; Sports Marketing; Economic Development; Nigeria.

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Sports sponsorship has emerged as a significant strategy within the broader framework of sports marketing, particularly as it fosters the alignment of brands with teams, events, and athletes to engage target audiences more deeply. In Nigeria, sports sponsorships have gained attraction in the last decade, helping to increase visibility, investment, and infrastructure development in Delta State where sports are essential to community identity and economic potential (Agbebi & Ogunmuyiwa, 2019; Varaba, & Berebon, 2021). Specifically, in Delta State, known for their rich sporting culture and vibrant youth populations, sponsorship offers a unique opportunity to amplify the impact of sports marketing efforts by connecting brands with local and regional sports activities. This approach not only supports the promotion of sports but also helps in building community engagement, enhancing economic growth, and fostering brand loyalty among consumers (Umotong, 1999; Onyeji & Eghosa, 2020).

The value of sports sponsorship lies in its multifaceted benefits. Sponsorships can drive brand visibility and engagement, as they leverage the emotional investment audiences have in sports (Ibrahim et al., 2021). In state such as Delta, where sporting events often serve as unifying cultural activities, effective sponsorship strategies can facilitate a sense of community while also spurring local economic development (Okon & Noah, 2004; Adeleke, 2022). Furthermore, evidence suggests that strategic partnerships between brands and sports entities can lead to greater attendance at sports events, increased media attention, and a stronger sense of local pride in regional sports (Umotong, 2008; Nwachukwu & Nwosu, 2023).

Despite the challenges faced by the sports sector in Nigeria, including funding gaps and limited infrastructure, sports sponsorship remains a promising avenue for growth and sustainability. When appropriately implemented, sponsorship initiatives can transcend promotional objectives, yielding broader societal benefits, such as the provision of modern sporting facilities, the training of local talent, and the potential for sports tourism, all of which contribute to economic progress in Delta State (Umotong, 2014; Uche et al., 2023). As sports sponsorship continues to evolve, it holds the potential to serve as a catalyst for effective sports marketing and regional development in Nigeria, underscoring its importance as a panacea for enhancing both brand presence and sports popularity in Delta State.

Sports sponsorship has become a vital component of sports marketing, providing financial support and resources essential for the development of sporting activities. In Nigeria, particularly in Delta State, the intersection of sports sponsorship and marketing has significant implications for enhancing the visibility and viability of local sports. This review examines recent literature on sports sponsorship as a strategic tool for effective sports marketing in Delta State.

Sports sponsorship refers to the investment by a company or organization in sporting events or teams in exchange for brand exposure, marketing opportunities, and community engagement (Mullin et al., 2020; Umotong, 2021). According to Hemsley

and Dwyer (2021), sponsorship in sports serves multiple purposes, including increasing brand awareness, fostering customer loyalty, and enhancing corporate reputation. This is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where sports serve as a unifying force across diverse communities.

Sponsorship has been identified as a key driver in sports marketing strategies, providing essential funding that can significantly enhance the quality and reach of sporting events. Smith and Stewart (2018) assert that effective sponsorship leads to increased visibility for brands and offers teams and athletes the resources needed for growth and development. In the context of Delta State, local sponsorship deals can transform grassroots sports initiatives, ensuring that talents are nurtured from the community level (Ogunjimi, 2020).

In Delta State, sports sponsorship plays a crucial role in promoting local talents and providing platforms for athletes. A study by Adamu et al. (2022) highlights that partnerships between local businesses and sports organizations can lead to improved training facilities, equipment, and opportunities for athletes to participate in competitions. Furthermore, these sponsorships often contribute to the economic development of the regions by creating jobs and encouraging local investment in sports infrastructure (Umotong, & Dennis, 2018; Okwori, 2023).

Despite the potential benefits, sports sponsorship in Nigeria faces numerous challenges. Factors such as lack of awareness, inadequate marketing strategies, and poor management of sponsorship agreements can hinder the effectiveness of sponsorships (Nwankwo, 2021). Additionally, the perception of sports sponsorship as a mere marketing tactic rather than a partnership for mutual benefit can limit its success (Eze et al., 2023).

The evolving landscape of digital marketing and social media presents new opportunities for sports sponsorship. According to Ogbu et al. (2024), brands can leverage these platforms to create more engaging sponsorship campaigns that resonate with younger audiences. This shift can enhance the visibility of local sporting events and encourage greater community participation.

Sports sponsorship emerges as a vital tool for effective sports marketing in Delta State. It offers numerous benefits, including financial support, increased visibility, and the potential for community development. However, addressing the challenges faced in the sponsorship landscape will be essential for maximizing its effectiveness. Future research should focus on developing innovative sponsorship models that leverage digital marketing and foster genuine partnerships between businesses and sports organizations.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the cultural significance of sports in Delta State, the sports sector faces several challenges, including limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and low consumer engagement. These issues hamper the effectiveness of sports marketing and restrict opportunities for state economic growth. While sports sponsorship has proven

successful in enhancing brand visibility, audience engagement, and economic outcomes in other regions, it remains underutilized and insufficiently explored in Delta State. There is a pressing need to understand how sponsorships can effectively address these issues, supporting the development of local sports while fostering economic and social benefits.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims at:

1. examining the extent sports sponsorship enhance consumers' perception
2. suggesting means of improving sports sponsorships in Delta State.

RESEARCH QUESTION

To guide the study the research questions was used to guide the study:

Does sports sponsorships enhance consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State?

HYPOTHESIS

The hypotheses was formulated to guide the study:

Sports sponsorship would not significantly enhance consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used for this study was the descriptive research. The population for the study was 120 respondents consists of all the Sports marketers, Sports coaches, Sports journalists, and Sportsmen/women in Delta State, Nigeria. The questionnaire retived was used for the dtudy and analyzes. The sample for the study consists of one hundred (100) randomly selected Sports marketers, Sports coaches, Sports journalists, and Sportsmen/women with ten (10) participants per unit/sectors in Delta State. The simple random sampling technique was utilized for the study.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Research Question One: Does sports sponsorships enhance consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State?

Table 1: Sports Sponsorships Enhance Consumer Perception Of Sports Marketing

S/N	ITEM	N	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	DECISION
1.	Sports sponsorships improve the overall appeal of sports marketing in Delta States.	100	2.63	.36440	Accepted
2.	I am more likely to engage with sports events that are backed by	100	2.62	.78210	Accepted

	reputable sponsors in Delta States.				
3.	Sponsorship in sports increases my trust in the marketed sports events within Delta States.	100	2.55	.32454	Accepted
4.	Sports sponsorships enhance the perceived quality of sports marketing efforts in Delta States.	100	3.12	.89893	Accepted
5.	I believe that sponsorships positively influence my perception of sports brands and products in Delta States.	100	3.64	1.20605	Accepted

table 1 above: Sports Sponsorships Enhance Consumer Perception of Sports Marketing on the, **Improvement in Overall Appeal** (Mean = 2.63, SD = 0.36440): Respondents agree that sports sponsorships enhance the appeal of sports marketing. The low standard deviation indicates that most responses are closely clustered around the mean, showing general consensus. **Engagement with Sponsored Events** (Mean = 2.62, SD = 0.78210): The mean shows that participants are more likely to engage with sports events sponsored by reputable brands. However, a higher standard deviation suggests variability in engagement levels, potentially influenced by personal interest or awareness of sponsors. **Trust in Marketed Sports Events** (Mean = 2.55, SD = 0.32454): Trust in sports events improves with sponsorships. The low standard deviation implies consistent agreement, indicating that sponsorships play a role in building consumer confidence in sports events. **Enhanced Perceived Quality** (Mean = 3.12, SD = 0.89893):

This item has a higher mean, suggesting strong agreement that sponsorships improve the perceived quality of sports marketing. However, the higher standard deviation shows more diverse opinions, possibly due to varying levels of exposure or satisfaction with sponsorship quality. **Positive Influence on Brand Perception** (Mean = 3.64, SD = 1.20605): This is the highest-rated item, indicating strong belief that sponsorships positively affect consumer perceptions of sports brands. The large standard deviation reflects a wide range of opinions, possibly driven by differing brand loyalties or experiences.

The data confirms that sports sponsorships enhance consumer perceptions of sports marketing in Delta State. All items were accepted, showing broad agreement across all aspects of sponsorship influence. However, the variability in some responses suggests that while the overall impact is positive, personal experiences and awareness levels may influence the degree of perceived benefit. This underscores the need for sponsors to tailor their strategies for maximum impact and consistent consumer engagement.

Hypotheses one: Sports sponsorship would not significantly enhance consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State.

Table 2: Sports sponsorship would not significantly enhance consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State.

	Sports sponsorship would not significantly enhance consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State.
Chi - square	23.876
d.f	3
Assumption significance level	0.030

In table 2 above, the analysis explores whether sports sponsorship significantly enhances consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State using the Chi-square test. **Chi-square Value:** 23.876, This value measures the degree of difference between observed and expected frequencies in the data. A higher value indicates a stronger deviation from what would be expected under the null hypothesis. **Degrees of Freedom (d.f.):** 3, The degrees of freedom represent the number of independent values that can vary in the data set. For this analysis, it is calculated based on the number of categories minus one. **Significance Level (p-value):** 0.030

The significance level indicates the probability of obtaining the observed results if the null hypothesis were true. A common threshold for significance is 0.05. **Decision Rule Null Hypothesis (H₀):** Sports sponsorship would not significantly enhance consumer perception of sports marketing. Since the p-value (0.030) is less than the significance threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that sports sponsorship *does* significantly enhance consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State.

The Chi-square analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship between sports sponsorship and consumer perception of sports marketing. This suggests that sponsorships play a crucial role in improving how consumers perceive sports marketing efforts in Delta State. Stakeholders should leverage sponsorships to maximize marketing effectiveness and improve consumer engagement.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Sports Sponsorships Enhance Consumer Perception of Sports Marketing: The findings from the analysis highlight the significant role sports sponsorships play in enhancing consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State. The data indicates that sports sponsorships improve the overall appeal of sports marketing. This suggests that sponsorships add credibility and excitement to sports events, making them more attractive to consumers. By associating with reputable sponsors, events gain legitimacy and a professional image, which can draw larger audiences.

Consumers reported a higher likelihood of engaging with sports events backed by reputable sponsors. This reflects the influence of brand associations, where well-known sponsors can enhance the perceived value of events. Reputable sponsorships may signal quality and reliability, encouraging greater participation and viewership. Sponsorships were found to increase trust in sports events. Trust is a critical factor in consumer decision-making, and the involvement of respected sponsors can reassure consumers about the integrity and quality of the event. This trust can translate into higher attendance, viewership, and brand loyalty.

The findings show that sports sponsorships significantly enhance the perceived quality of marketing efforts. Consumers associate sponsorship with improved production values, better organization, and more engaging promotional activities. This perceived quality boost can enhance the overall experience and satisfaction with the event. Sponsorships positively influence consumer perceptions of sports brands and products. This aligns with the concept of *brand transfer*, where the positive attributes of the sponsor are transferred to the sponsored event or product. Consumers may view both the sponsor and the event more favorably, leading to stronger brand affinity and loyalty.

The findings confirm that sports sponsorships are a vital tool for enhancing consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State. They contribute to improving event appeal, fostering trust, and building positive brand associations. By strategically leveraging sponsorships, stakeholders can optimize the impact of their marketing efforts and drive long-term growth in the sports industry.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that sports sponsorships significantly enhance consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State. Sponsorships improve the overall appeal, increase trust, and boost engagement with sports events, while also enhancing the perceived quality of marketing efforts. Furthermore, sponsorships positively influence consumer perceptions of associated brands, creating a favourable image that can drive loyalty and support.

These results highlight the strategic importance of sponsorships in sports marketing. By partnering with reputable sponsors, event organizers and marketers can amplify the value and credibility of their offerings, ultimately fostering stronger connections with their audience. However, to sustain these benefits, it is crucial to adopt ethical practices, ensure equitable access to sponsorship opportunities, and continuously evaluate consumer feedback.

In summary, sports sponsorships are a powerful tool for driving growth and innovation in the sports sector. Their effective implementation can help Delta State's sports industry remain competitive and appealing to both local and global audiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of sports sponsorships in improving consumer perception of sports marketing in Delta State:

1. Event organizers should prioritize collaborations with well-known and trusted sponsors. This will help enhance the credibility, appeal, and perceived quality of sports events, encouraging greater consumer trust and engagement.
2. Sponsors and event organizers should ensure high visibility of sponsorship activities through various marketing channels, such as social media, event branding, and digital campaigns. Interactive initiatives, like contests and give aways, can also boost consumer participation and loyalty.
3. Sports marketers should educate consumers on the benefits of sponsorships and the role they play in improving the quality of sports events. This can help address any skepticism and build a stronger connection between the audience, the event, and its sponsors.
4. Sports marketers should maintain consumer trust, it is essential to uphold ethical standards in sponsorship agreements. Transparency in sponsorship terms and avoiding overly commercialized messages can help sustain a positive consumer perception.

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