

Role of Broadcast Media in Promoting Nigerian Sports Through Marketing

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Abstract

The main aim of the study was to examine how sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media aids sports development in the country. The work sought answers to the challenges sports marketers encounter in their dealings with the Nigerian broadcast media and evaluated the perception of sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media among sports journalists. The work was anchored on the AIDA Marketing model. The study adopted mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative research design using the questionnaire and in-depth interview guide as research instruments. Copies of the questionnaire were filled by three hundred respondents while three sports marketing executives were interviewed. The findings from the study are that effective sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media aids sports development by making sports products like the Nigeria Premier Football League popular among Nigerians and attracting sponsors; that high cost of airtime, lack of trust, market uncertainties and lack of infrastructure are some of the challenges sports marketers encounter and that Nigerian sports journalists have a positive perception of sports marketing noting that its effective use increases the popularity of the NPFL leading to investment by sponsors

which engenders sports development in the country. Consequently, it was recommended that the Nigerian broadcast media improve their involvement in sports marketing and significantly increase their coverage of the Nigeria Premier Football League and other domestic sports products in order to aid sports development in the country.

Keywords: Sports marketing, sports development, broadcast media, challenges, NPFL.

Introduction

Nigeria is a country with an enviable pedigree in sports. The nation has over the years participated in and won several laurels from international sporting events such as the Olympic Games, the Commonwealth Games, the African Games, the Africa Cup of Nations, the Women's Africa Cup of Nations, the Federation of International Football Federation (FIFA) Under-17 World Cup and many others. Despite these achievements, Ukpe (2021) observed that sports are failing in Nigeria and bedevilled with a myriad of challenges such as corruption, maladministration, poor preparation for international events and protests by athletes. These issues have contributed to the poor ranking of the country's elite football division, the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) in Africa in spite of the fact that football is Nigeria's number one sport. Adesanya (2024) noted that the International Federation of Football History and Statistic (IFFHS) ranked the NPFL 7th on the African continent behind Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, South Africa and Tanzania. Dozie (2024) contends that this explains why one of the top central defenders in the Nigerian league, Benjamin Tanimu left Bendel Insurance for Ihefu SC in the Tanzanian league.

Sports is a thriving enterprise all over the world. Events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games have become global phenomena watched by billions of people. Countries now use sporting activities as public relations instruments to rebrand themselves (Omoera & Bardi, 2020). This is why multinational organisations leverage on these events to market their products and services. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), an Indian company announced that it would spend as much as 320 million dollars on marathon sponsorships including the popular London Marathon. Zakariah (2021) noted that this made TCS one of the biggest spenders in the running event. Similarly, Rinke and Peterson (2022) observed that Amaury Sport which organises the annual Tour de France generates between 150 million and 200 million Euros annually from the event. Many of these events are usually facilitated by strategic and aggressive sports marketing campaigns in the broadcast media of those countries. In contrast, it appears that the Nigerian broadcast media are not performing the critical role of domestic sports promotion through effective marketing. The focus of this study is how the Nigerian broadcast media can be used to promote domestic sporting products and aid sports development as it obtains in other parts of the world.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's sporting prowess has long been established internationally. However, it is of concern that the sports sector has not been transformed into a hugely lucrative industry.

Given the country's population and talents, sports ought to be a billion-dollar industry like in other climes. This suggests that sports marketing in Nigeria is not at the level it is in certain parts of the world where sports is a huge revenue earner. Gough (2022) observed that the advertising revenue from the 2021 Super Bowl, the final of the National Football League (NFL) in the United States of America was a record 485 million U.S. dollars with an average 30-second advert spot during the Super Bowl broadcast costing an estimated 6.5 million U.S dollars Similarly, Ukpe (2021) noted that sports and physical activities contributed 39 billion pounds to the United Kingdom economy with a significant portion of this sum coming from grassroots sports. In all of these, the media help to facilitate the process. For instance, Cox (2017) credited the English media with making the EPL the most popular football league in the world. The media in England relentlessly cover the EPL, largely focus on positive reportage and have hyped it to the point that it is perceived as the best in the world.

Ojeikere (2021) noted that the Nigerian media have not performed the role of aiding the growth of the NPFL. The problem that this study sought to explore is that while it has been observed that the broadcast media in other countries drive sports marketing and aid sports development, the Nigerian broadcast media have not been doing the same. The Nigerian broadcast media in particular do not give prominence to domestic sporting events like the National Sports Festival and the NPFL instead paying more attention to foreign football leagues. Emuze (2021) noted that the country's biggest sports event, the National Sports Festival has been bedevilled by serious problems for several years. It appears that the lack of effective sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media has contributed to this. The objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the engagement level of the Nigerian broadcast media in sports marketing
2. Establish how sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media aids sports development in the country;
3. Examine the challenges sports marketers encounter in Nigeria;

Literature Review

It is pertinent to examine the concepts of marketing, sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media and sports as a tool of development before reviewing relevant literature on the subject. According to Smith and Stewart (2015, p.2) marketing is "all about satisfying the needs of customers and consumers". Similarly, the American Marketing Association cited in Iwu (2009, p.1) defines marketing as "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals." Panagiota and Vasiliki (2018, p.8) aver that the term 'sports marketing' first appeared in the United States by Advertising Age magazine in 1978". Since then, it has been used to describe a variety of activities related to the promotion of sports. Panagiota and Vasiliki (2018, p.8) further defined sports marketing as "the implementation of

activities/marketing functions in sports products and services and the marketing of non-sports products or services through their connection to sport”.

It is important to note that sports marketing comes in different forms in the Nigerian broadcast media. There are sports marketing companies such as Pamodzi Sports Marketing Nilayo Sports Management Limited and Mastersports International which engage in corporate sports marketing, sponsorship, hospitality, athlete/player marketing, organisation of sporting events and sports rights acquisition. There are also independent sports marketers/independent producers who create sports content and syndicate them on different television and radio stations in Nigeria. Sports is a tool for development in the society. According to Yazid (2006) cited in Mohammed (2017), sports development refers to the gradual increase, attainment and advancement of sport from low level strata to a higher level with due cognizance and consideration of the indices that enhance its realisation and actualization of sports development. Hosting international sporting events also brings about development as this means building infrastructure. Countries which host championships like the FIFA World Cup spend billions of dollars to develop their infrastructure.

Sporting events have been used as a tool for national development in Nigeria over the years. The country built the National Stadium, Surulere, Lagos to host the 1973 All Africa Games (*Thisday* Editorial, 2016). Decades later, the stadium still serves the country. Alegba (2019) noted that the Games Village which accommodated the athletes who participated in the competition was sold by the government Nigerians in 2005. Similarly, Jannamike (2022) observed that the National Stadium, Abuja (now MKO Abiola Stadium) was built to host the 2003 All Africa Games. Legacies of that hosting are a state-of-the-art 60,000-capacity stadium and a Games Village with 694 units of houses which is now where thousands of Nigerians live. In an article titled, “Sports Marketing in Nigeria: Government’s Funding and Sports Development Recommendations”, Akarah (2014) noted that the Nigerian government was the biggest investor in sports in terms of funding.

Boluwaji, Babalola and Bamitale (2019) in their work titled, “Critical Review of Sport as a Catalyst for Peace and Development in Nigeria” studied the importance of sports to Nigeria’s national development. The researchers observed that media organisations earn lots of money from providing local, national or global satellite coverage of major tournaments. This is in line with the thrust of this study. The researchers noted that over the years, sports have been used to create employment not just for sportsmen and women but for several others including coaches, managers, agents, medical personnel, media practitioners and many others. Since these people earn a living through sports, they engage in the demand of goods and services in the society leading to growth and development of the Nigerian economy. In line with the marketing value of sports that is a theme of this work, the work avers that sports provide a huge business opportunity in merchandising and has aided the emergence of several manufacturing industries which specialise in the production of sports attires, sports equipment, sports souvenirs, health products and services for sportsmen, women

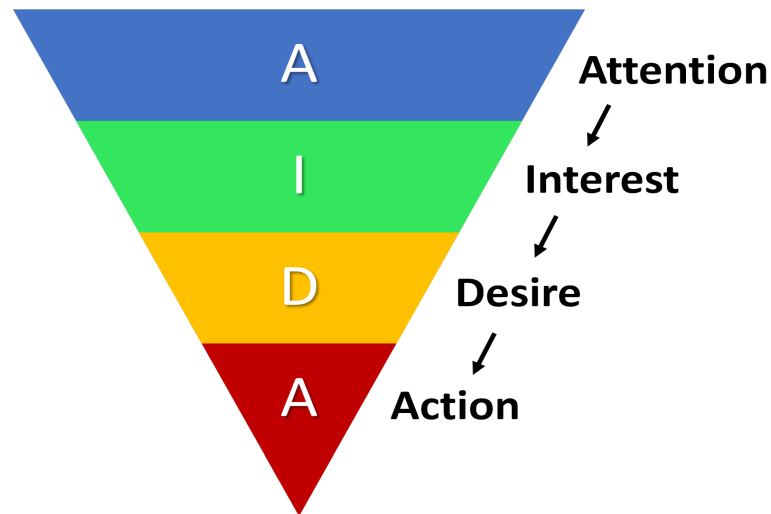
and fans. These industries contribute immensely to socio-economic development of the country.

Eze (2015) observed that numerous authorities have highlighted the importance of the media to sports, stating that contemporary sports cannot survive in Nigeria with only government funding but would require aggressive sports marketing involving the full weight of the mass media. This can be achieved when the media pays attention to institutional sports by helping them to get sponsors for local sporting events such as the Nigeria Premier Football League and the National Sports Festival. This aligns with objective 1 of this study. Ajibola (2017) investigated Sports Strategy as a Predictor on Sports Development in South West Nigeria. The researcher used a sample of 2,441 respondents comprising athletes, coaches, sports council officials, corporate organisations personnel and sports fans. In line with objective 1 of this work, findings established that there was a significant relationship between direct marketing and sports development in Nigeria and significant correlation between personal selling and sports development in Nigeria. The researcher concluded that direct marketing and personal selling strategies were significant predictors of sports development in Nigeria.

Aina (2018) studied Sport Marketing Indices as Correlates of Basketball Development in Nigeria. The work examined the correlation between the marketing mix – product, price, place, promotion (advertisement) and basketball development in Nigeria. It also analysed the correlation between the sports media and the development of basketball in the country. This is in line with objective 1 of this study which sought to establish how effective sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media can aid sports development in the country. Findings revealed a positive significant relationship between sports products, price, place and advertisement and basketball development in Nigeria. The study also established a positive significant correlation between the sports media and basketball development. In particular, the study revealed that the mix of sponsorship, advertizing and the media contribute more to basketball development in Nigeria than any other marketing indices.

Theoretical Orientation

This study was anchored on the *AIDA Marketing Model* to engender the understanding of sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media. The AIDA model was introduced in 1898 by American advertising and sales pioneer St. Elmo Lewis in one of his publications on advertising (Li & Yu, 2013). AIDA is an acronym which stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. The model is represented by what is known as the inverted triangle.



Source: business-to-you.com

The AIDA Marketing Model has been praised for its simplicity and usefulness in areas other than advertising. The biggest criticism of the model is that it is too simplistic and does not cover after purchase effects like customer satisfaction, consumption and referrals (Bardi & Omoera, 2014).

Application of the Theory

The AIDA Marketing Model is excellent for explaining the subject of how sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media can aid sports development in the country. It could help the sports marketer to plan and tailor the communication towards the target audience. By meticulously following the four steps of the AIDA Marketing Model, the sports marketer can get a product like the NPFL for instance to become acceptable to the customer. In the first step, which is attention, the sports marketer has to devise means of making the customer aware of his product. An effective tool to use here is the mass media. Having attracted the attention of spectators and sponsors, the sports marketer has to plan how to gain their interest in the NPFL. This could be done through the placement of concise messages about the positives of the league on radio, TV and the social media. The next step is to make them desire the product. This can achieve this by hyping the unique qualities of the league. For instance, jingles and promos about the NPFL could be framed to highlight the fact that supporting it means helping local families and communities as the players would become breadwinners and help take care of their families. The final stage is action. If the spectator and sponsor are interested in the NPFL till this stage, it is likely that they will act and buy the product. More spectators watching the NPFL will attract more sponsors

Methodology

This research adopted the quantitative and qualitative designs to elicit relevant information using the mixed methods of questionnaire survey and in-depth interview. Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo and Okpanachi (2012, p.244)) noted that the mixed method is a "powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross

verification from one or two methodological approaches or source to increase the credibility and validity of the results". The use of survey research method for this study became necessary as Okwechime (2011) observed that the survey helps to find out opinions, attitudes, preferences and knowledge of people. The population of the study comprised the 325 registered sports journalists in Lagos State. This information was obtained from the secretariat of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) Lagos State chapter. Census was used to determine sample size. The choice of Lagos was influenced by the fact that the state has one of the most active Sports Writers Association of Nigeria, (SWAN) chapters in the country. Purposive sampling was used to administer copies of the questionnaire to Nigerian sports journalists on the criterion of being registered members of SWAN, Lagos State Chapter. Of the 325 copies of questionnaire distributed, 300 were retrieved and used. In-depth interviews were also conducted with the CEOs of three sports marketing companies who are independent producers of sports programmes on Nigerian radio and television stations. They were selected on the basis of being reputable practitioners in the field of sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: To what level do the Nigerian broadcast media engage in sports Marketing?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Very Low	14	4.7	4.7
Low	128	42.7	42.7
Undecided	53	17.7	17.7
High	88	29.3	29.3
Very High	17	5.7	5.7
Total	300	100.0	100.0

It can be surmised from table 1 above that the Nigerian broadcast media engagement in sports marketing is inadequate. The consequence of this is that a product like the NPFL will not get the positive exposure it requires to be attractive to sponsors.

Table 2: Marketing sporting products like the NPFL, the basketball league and the National Sports Festival on the Nigerian broadcast media aids sports development in the country

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Agree	76	25.3	25.3

Strongly agree	217	72.3	72.3
Disagree	7	2.3	2.3
Strongly disagree	0	0	0
Undecided	0	0	0
Total	300	100.0	100.0

The analysis of table 2 implies that if the Nigerian broadcast media increase their coverage of a product like the NPFL, it would become more popular among Nigerians and this would compel big brands to advertise on it. For instance, brands like Heineken are associated with the UEFA Champions League which is hugely popular in Nigeria. If the NPFL is popular enough to attract big brands, it would generate more money and engender sports development in the country like the English Premier League does in England.

Presentation and Analysis of Qualitative Data

The analysis of the qualitative data generated by the researchers provided the answer to objective 3 which examined the challenges sports marketers encounter in Nigeria. In-depth interviews were conducted on Frank Ilaboya – CEO of Sportsville Communications Limited, Bimbo Adeola – CEO of 27 July Limited and Godwin Enakhena – CEO of Global Sports. Being active participants in sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media, the responses of these experts are critical to understanding the issues. Sports marketers are usually independent producers who do not own the broadcast stations hence rely on them to air their contents. One of the challenges raised by Enakhena was the high cost of airtime costs. He noted that sports marketers were at the mercy of some broadcast stations that demand exorbitant rates to air programmes and were either constantly increasing their rates or insisting on upfront payments, even when the marketers have not been paid by the client. This makes it extremely difficult for the sports marketer to sustain programmes on air.

Another challenge the sports marketers encounter is market uncertainties. Adeola noted that it is really difficult to get sponsors for programmes given the current economic realities. Most clients prefer to do spot booking instead of fully branding the programme, which makes it very difficult for business growth. Ilaboya highlighted the issue of programme displacement as broadcast stations sometimes displace programmes that sports marketers have already paid for if the timing clashes with live event coverage which pay more. What they do as compensation is to air the programme at another time which may be inappropriate. If the format of the displaced sports

programme is live, it is usually not possible to reschedule. The issue of compliance was another challenge sports marketers said they encountered with broadcast stations. Some stations do not air commercials as scheduled which lead to the marketers losing money because advertising agencies usually refuse to pay once their tracking agencies allege noncompliance. There is also the challenge of a growing lack of trust. Some broadcast stations do not trust independent sports marketers anymore because some persons have betrayed their trust. The stations sometimes insist on payment before giving airtime but this might be impossible as advertising agencies typically pay 90 days after the programme is aired. Due to the problem of lack of trust highlighted above, some broadcast stations prefer direct access to advertising agencies rather than dealing with sports marketers. It can be deduced from the responses that the terrain of sports marketing in the Nigerian broadcast media is really tough. Lack of professionalism, high cost of airtime, lack of trust and the state of the economy all combine to constitute constraints to the growth of the sports marketing industry in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

From the analyses of the data generated, these are the findings of the study. The Nigerian broadcast media level of engagement in sports marketing is low. A majority of the respondents sampled rated the Nigerian broadcast media involvement in sports marketing poorly. The Nigerian broadcast media lack of engagement in sports marketing through the promotion of domestic products like the NPFL reveals a gap in aiding sports development in Nigeria. The English Premier League is a global phenomenon today largely due to the efforts of the media. This assertion was highlighted by Cox (2017) who opined that the rise of the EPL all over the world is based solely on the positive coverage it gets from the English media. However, the same cannot be said of the Nigerian broadcast media. Score Nigeria Editor (2020) opined that rather than consolidate on previous deals to air the NPFL on television, broadcast partners like Supersport have been compelled to leave the country.

This was because the South African broadcaster which signed a five-year contract to air the NPFL in 2013 for 8.5 million dollars annually, soon realised that they were making losses as big brands in Nigeria preferred to place adverts on English Premier League games. Having to spend a minimum of 5 million naira to produce a game without steady revenue in advertising coming in, Supersport was forced to renegotiate the terms of the contract to enable it pay in naira. When the league governing body at the time rejected the proposal, Supersport legally opted out citing breach of contract. It has been established that the media in other countries aid sports development through promotion of their domestic sports products. Effective sports marketing in the Nigerian media will also aid sports development in the country. Airing matches of the NPFL increases the popularity of domestic league among Nigerians. An overwhelming majority of 293 respondents (97.6%) agree that marketing

the NPFL, the basketball league and the National Sports Festival aids sports development in the country.

In other words, if the Nigerian broadcast media increase their coverage of a product like the NPFL, it would become more popular among Nigerians and attract big brands to advertise on it. For instance, brands like Heineken are associated with the UEFA Champions League which is hugely popular in Nigeria. If the NPFL is popular enough to attract big brands, it would generate more money and engender sports development in the country like the English Premier League does in England. Some of the challenges that sports marketers highlighted in their dealings with broadcast stations include high cost of airtime, market uncertainties, lack of trust, lack of awareness, poor infrastructure, lack of compliance and programme displacement. These are serious issues which have a negative impact on sports marketing. As the industry is important for the growth and development of sports in Nigeria, it is imperative that these challenges are overcome. There is a need for the sports marketers to raise these issues with the broadcast stations in order to resolve them. Sports marketers need the broadcast stations and the media also need them. Likewise, the Nigerian broadcast media have to do more to aid sports marketing. Ojeikere (2021) advocated this when he averred that while the English media have aided the growth of the Premier League since inception in 1992 to the point of it becoming a huge revenue earner for England and the United Kingdom through effective sports marketing, the Nigerian broadcast media have not been able to achieve this.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the Nigerian broadcast media engagement in sports marketing is inadequate. 195 respondents (65.1%) of the 300 sampled scored the broadcast media engagement in sports marketing poorly. While the media in other countries have helped to grow their domestic sporting products, the Nigerian broadcast media have not performed this role very well. Sports marketing is crucial to sports development. If the Nigerian broadcast media positively promote the country's domestic products like the NPFL, they will attract more spectators and sponsors thereby aiding sports development. Sports marketers are hindered by challenges they encounter in their dealings with Nigerian broadcast stations in their quest to promote domestic sports through quality programmes. Based on the above, the recommendations of the study are:

1. The Nigerian broadcast media have to significantly improve their engagement in sports marketing which is currently low. Sports is a media event and marketing is essential to its growth. The broadcast media should therefore see themselves as critical stakeholders in the industry by developing programmes which promote sports in the country.
2. The Nigerian broadcast media have to significantly increase their coverage of the NPFL and other domestic sports products as it has been established that this aids sports development. It is unacceptable that they are devoting more time to foreign leagues than the NPFL. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC)

which regulates the broadcasting industry should ensure that the broadcast media complies with their policy of 60% local content in sports programming. This will aid the promotion of sports the way it aided the growth of Nollywood as an industry.

3. The broadcast media should address the challenges raised by sports marketers. As the industry is important for the growth and development of sports in Nigeria, it is imperative that these challenges are overcome. There is a need for the sports marketers to raise these issues with the broadcast stations in order to resolve them. Sports marketers need the broadcast stations and the media also need them so it would be mutually beneficial to find a solution to the issues.

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