

Perceived Impact of Journalism on Awareness and Spectatorship as Indices for Sports Development in Lagos State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT This study was designed to determine the perceived impact of journalism on awareness and spectatorship as indices of sports development in Lagos State of Nigeria. The purposive and random sampling techniques were adopted in selecting four hundred and eighty (480) respondents made up of sports journalists and stakeholders in the sports industry, descriptive research design with a self-structured questionnaire ($r = b8$) was used for data collection. The chi-square (χ^2) was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05alpha level. The analysis revealed that the two variables were indices of sports development (Awareness -37.59, $p < 0.05$, 2df; Spectatorship - 12.47, $p < 0.05$, 2df).

INTRODUCTION

The most important change that has taken place in the sport industry is the significant role the media is playing in the development of sports all over the world. Apart from the fact that the media has increased sports awareness and spectatorship among peoples of the world, it has also increased revenue generation which has enriched the various sports stakeholders. The media has been playing a catalyst role for the identification and the promotion of knowledge, information and understanding in a nation (Alimi, 2003). The mass media is regarded as the means of communication through which a large number of people could be reached. These include, newspapers, television, radio, films, handbills, posters, computer and internet (Hornby 1985).

The mass media [sharpens and re-orders] the perceptions of the readers and viewers in a particular event or happenings in the society and contributes to a reservoir of knowledge of the past and current events. Acosta (2002) pointed out that competitive sports would only survive and develop with the cooperation of the media. It is for this reason that sports must enjoy good relationship with the press, radio, and television. The relationship should be effective, continuous, personal and open.

Lagos State was created on May 27, 1967 when the restructuring of Nigeria into twelve states took place. Many media organizations have sprung up in Lagos State and because of the economic status of Lagos State and its status

as the former capital of Nigeria. The presence of many media organizations in Lagos State has confirmed her being acclaimed to be the seat of journalism in Nigeria. In essence then, it is the state where sports journalism thrives.

There is no doubt that Lagos State has witnessed tremendous development in the area of sports most especially when compared to other states of Nigeria. Sports have permeated the Nigerian society through the efforts, activities and commitments of Nigerian sports journalists. This study, therefore, was set to determine the perceived impact of journalism on awareness and spectatorship as indices for sports development in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Research Questions: The study attempted to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Will the impact of sports journalism on awareness be perceived as an index of sports development in Lagos State?
2. Will the impact of sports journalism on spectatorship be perceived as an index of sports development in Lagos State?

Related Literature: Literature that focused on the role of journalism in sports development were perused. The literature included in this section predominantly contains information pertaining to: history of journalism in Nigeria, sports journalism practice in Nigeria, awareness as element of sports development in Lagos State, influence of spectatorship in sports development in Lagos State, definition and construct of perception, application of perception and implications of perception.

History of Journalism in Nigeria: The history of journalism in Nigeria could be traced to the activities of a British-Anglican Missionary to Nigeria, Reverend Henry Townsend, who published the newspaper for "Egba" people and Yorubas in Abeokuta. The first edition was released on December 3, 1859. The growth of journalism in Nigeria begun from this humble beginning, and the newspapers that sprung up at this period focused mainly on politics and fight for freedom.

Today, journalism practice has advanced greatly to such an extent that journalists are now accorded respect and the focus of media has expanded to include economics, politics, social and sports. Furthermore, print journalism is not limited to only daily newspapers but has extended to weekly news magazines and some of them are printed in Nigerian local languages.

Sports Journalism Practice in Nigeria: Sports journalists, according to Alimi (2003) have crucial roles to play in the ongoing efforts to use sports as a vehicle for social mobilization geared towards building a prosperous country. It is the duty of the sports journalist to provide the audience with knowledge, information and understanding. Effective broadcasters and announcers attract spectators and sports enthusiasts to sports happenings.

Awareness as Elements of Sports Development: Mariadass (2005) pointed out that information on the plans and programs for sports should be well distributed and the media in turn must fully understand what the program is all about on sports in order to create awareness among the readers and electronic audience. Alimi (2003) and United Nations (UN) (2003) pointed out that sports journalists can effectively influence the conduct and administration of sports in Nigeria and that the information given to readers on recent developments at the local and international levels would create the required awareness in the efforts towards development of sport that, for instance, UN (2003) encouraged the cooperation between UNICEF and FIFA in promoting the "say YES for children" campaign.

Influence of Spectatorship in Sports Development: Sport is regarded as one of the world's most powerful communication tools, as a result of its near universal appeal, convening power and its many associations. These characteristics confer on sports the capacity to reach a range of

audiences in a variety of ways, most especially those that are difficult to reach (UN 2003).

The influence of spectators in sports cannot be over emphasized. The presence of spectators provides an added pro-active effect and improves performance, all things being equal. In sports event, a large number of people are present at such venues either to enjoy the fun or act as active supporters. It should be noted however, that misrepresentation in the sports news do at times cause upsets and embarrassment. This might have been unwittingly created.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived impact of journalism on awareness and spectatorship among shareholders in sports development in Lagos State, Nigeria.

METHODS

Subjects: The participants for this study were all sports journalists who were members of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) and also stakeholders in sports development in Lagos State, Nigeria. A total number of 480 persons participated in the study, which accounted for ten percent of the total population. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the different categories of participants.

Research Design and Instrumentation: The descriptive survey research design using a self-structured modified likert-type questionnaire was used. The yes/no questions [response format] was used for the survey. The content of the survey questions was based on current literature related to impact of journalism in sports development. The feedback obtained from 30 respondents of the same characteristics as the final sample, helped to establish the content validity of the survey. A reliability co-efficient of 0.68 was obtained after subjecting the instrument to cronbach alpha statistic.

Coefficient of Reliability: After incorporating the suggested changes, the instrument was considered complete and ready to be administered to the participants. The questionnaire, in its final form, addressed the impact of journalism on awareness and spectatorship as indices for sports development through 20 questions relating to the following areas: (1) demographic status, (2) impact of journalism on awareness and (3) impact of journalism on spectatorship.

Data Collection: The questionnaire copies

were directly given to the respondents by the researchers and the five trained research assistants. The completed questionnaire was collected on the spot and when this was not possible, return visits were made to retrieve the outstanding ones.

FINDINGS

From the analysed data, the following are the findings

Impact of Journalism on Awareness: Through the activities of journalists, the awareness of a group of people in a subject matter could be raised through public service announcements; information in media publications and linkages. Sports development is a collective responsibility of the people in a nation. But then, their contributions could only be obtained when they are sufficiently aware of what is going on. It is the function of sports journalists to report sport events and thereby create a reasonable awareness among the citizen. It is therefore not surprising that to a large extent, peoples' (55.2%) interest in sports is due to the level of awareness created in them by the activities of sports journalists.

Even though many respondents (56.7%) did not read newspapers because of the sports columns, yet many agree (53.8%) that sports journalism has created an impact on peoples' awareness of sports development in Lagos State, Nigeria. And this is due to the view held (62.9%) that sports journalists do report all that viewers and readers of news media need to know about the goings on in sports in Lagos State

Impact of Journalism on Spectatorship: The presence of spectators at sports events are crucial to the performances of the participants

Table 1: Impact of sports journalism on awareness

S. Questions No.	Responses		
	Yes	No	Total
1. Activities of sports journalists created awareness in me for sports.	265	215	480
2. I read newspapers because of their sports columns.	208	272	480
3. Sports journalists report all what I seek to know about sports	302	178	480

Obtained Chi-square (χ^2) - 37.59, 2 df $p < 0.05$,
Table value = 5.99*Significant

Table 2: Impact of sports journalism on spectatorship

S. Questions No.	Responses		
	Yes	No	Total
1. Coverage of sports events by sports writers has contributed to the Increase in spectators in match venues.	305	175	480
2. Through sensitization in the electronics and print media, many people prefer watching sport events in Lagos State.	351	129	480
3. Sports development rate in Lagos State is traceable to the attendance of large number of spectators during sports competitions.	308	172	480

Obtained $\chi^2 = 12.47$, 2 df, $p < 0.05$

Table value = 5.99 *Significant

and the more the influx of people to sports venue, the more chances for sports development are available. It is not surprising therefore, that respondents (63.5%) were of the view that sports writers contributed to the increase in spectators at sports venues and agreed (73.1%) that it was due to the sensitization of sports journalists in the electronics and print media that motivate people to watch sports events in Lagos State.

Furthermore, many respondents (64.2%) were of the view that the rate of sports development in Lagos State is traceable to increase in attendance of spectators at competition venues. This increase in spectatorship attendance is the fall-out of the activities of sports journalists.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals the impact of journalism on awareness and spectatorship as indices of sport -development in Lagos State. The findings revealed that (a) Journalism had impacted on sports awareness in Lagos State and (b) Journalism had enhanced sports development through the increased turn-out of spectators at competition venues and arenas.

As revealed by the study, the respondents were of the view that being aware of the happenings in the field of sports has made it possible for them to change their perceptions and attitude towards sports issues. With an obtained chi-square value of 37.59; $p < 0.05$ alpha level, there is no doubt that awareness of the respondents is an index of sports development

in Lagos State. This is in total agreement with the saying that if people are not aware of your sport activities, then nothing is happening.

It was revealed by majority of respondents (63.5%) that journalism has enhanced attendance of spectators at sports competition venues and respondents (73.1 %) were of the opinion that sport reporting has further encouraged people in Lagos State to watch sports events even on television. In its totality, the respondents (64.2%) agreed that the rate of sports development in Lagos State could be traced to increase in sports spectatorship. The implication of the outcome of this study is that sports journalism, through creating awareness and enhancing spectatorship, has impacted greatly on the rate of sports development Lagos State, Nigeria.

For sport journalism to further contribute to sports development in Lagos State, and indeed Nigeria, elite athletes should be projected to enhance awareness and spectatorship. Furthermore, the media should also project the

campaign against bad health practices that promote HIV/AIDS and Drugs in sports. This would go a long way to promote the positive contribution of sport to healthful living among participants and spectators.

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