



Mass Media Coverage of Sports Events Impact and Sports Development in Delta State

Sunday Nathaniel Nwabuwe¹, Ugbome Maureen, Akarah², Emmanuel O³

¹University of Delta, Boji, 321103, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria

²University of Delta, Boji, 321103, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria

³University of Delta, Boji, 321103, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria

* Correspondent Author: sunday.nwabuwe@unidel.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This study sought to ascertain the extent to which mass media coverage of sports events has contributed to sports development in Delta State. Two research questions were raised to guide the study with a population of five hundred and ninety three (593) comprised of nineteen (19) sports writers, nineteen (19) sports journalists, two hundred and three (203) coaches, three hundred and twenty-six (326) athletes, and twenty-six (26) organising secretaries in Delta State, from which a sample size of three hundred and eighteen (329) was obtained with the sports writers, sports journalists, and sports organisers being purposively sampled while 50% of coaches and athletes were randomly sampled through balloting. A 15-item self-structured questionnaire scaled on a modified four-point Likert type rating of “very high” (VH 4), “high” (H 3), “low” (L 2), and “very low” (VL 1) with a reliability index (r) of 0.75 established with the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used for the study. The findings revealed that the mass media covers sports events in Delta State to a high extent and that the mass media has contributed to sports development in Delta State to a high extent. It was recommended that the Delta State government open up more vistas for mass media participation while ensuring that the sports development policy would include creating more outlets for generating revenue through sports by organising more sports competitions as well as establishing more recreational outlets at the local government level.

Keywords: Mass media, Sports, Sports development, Delta State sports participation, National Sports Festivals..

1. INTRODUCTION

Media coverage of sports, which refers to news reports, interviews, feature stories, and analyses of sports events, helps people be aware of the various sports and skill development as well as create an avenue for earning incomes through playing or coaching sports (Yta et al., 2020; Enos, 2022). Media consumption activities have gradually gravitated from political, economic, or production for consumption perspectives to those that are accompanied by a growing interest in the active audience (Papacharissi, 2015), symbolic culture, and textual analysis, thus providing a sketch of episodes in the mass media through newspaper, press, radio, and television with regards to sporting activities in Delta State.

Coakley (2017) identified sports as the arrangement of physical activities for competition

purposes, usually guided by established rules and regulations. Sports are human activities involving physical exertion and skill as the primary focus of the activity, with elements of competition or social participation where rules and patterns of behaviour governing the activity exist formally through the processes of being organised (Yta & Umukoro, 2018; Eime et al., 2020). Sport is any form of physical activity that aims to improve physical and mental health and social relationships through casual or structured participation (Sport England, 2016; Yta, 2015; Yta, 2017). Sport can thus be understood as a social institution that penetrates people's lives through the exchange of experiences to varying degrees and serves society in a variety of useful ways.

Drapo et al. (2021) reported that Nigeria contributed to the development of sport through

activities such as constructing and refurbishing sports facilities, hiring coaches and other support staff, training players, and providing welfare packages to players. It shows that we are continuing to invest. How you can reach your sport's development goals However, Akarah et al. (2021) argued that national policy on sport (2007) should encourage the development of sport through the development of sport structures, dispositions, and programmes that provide opportunities for individuals to access improved sporting facilities. It has been defined as the "continuous improvement of facilitating participation in sports, whether for fitness or to represent an organization, state, or country." Enos (2022) noted that media coverage of sports has had positive impacts on sports growth and development by contributing to an increase in individuals' skill levels, improving the quality of sports, and promoting the level of competition and fitness. Oshani (2015) noted that the prominence of sports, the publicity of local teams, the personality enhancement of players, and the engineering of fans' devotion to particular athletes or teams are usually enhanced by the media, and that payments by media organisations to show certain sporting events as well as sports sponsorship all add up to enhancing sports development.

Asemah et al. (2013) identified radio and television as the major broadcast media that carry out sports communication. The Nielson Company, which tracks the population of Americans who watch various television shows, reported that seven of the top ten most-watched television programmes in 2018 were sports-related, and that major sporting events such as the FA Cup, National League, Olympics, and World Cup, amongst others, receive a lot of media attention from major broadcast stations around the world (ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC). Delta State, on the other hand, is not left out of such mass media involvement, with print media outlets (Thisday, Pointer, Ika Weekly, and Urhobo Voice) and electronic media outlets (DBS, Warri; DBS, Asaba; NTA, Asaba, and Sleek FM) covering sports programmes during the week and weekends.

Television apparently represents just one element of sports' media reach, as thousands of Internet websites focus exclusively on an array of sports and physical activity topics, including official team information, player profiles, education (e.g., swimming techniques, coaching strategies), college recruiting, and fantasy sports. Eime et al. (2017) and (2016) noted that there were over 59 million fantasy

football users in sports with the They went on to say that sports is a social institution and a dynamic social force whose magnitude has been greatly augmented by the evolution of mass media and modern communication systems and whose pervasive nature has been dynamically influenced by the development of modern technologies in the internationalisation process, generating over \$7 billion. They went on to say that sports is a social institution and a dynamic social force whose magnitude has been greatly augmented by the evolution of mass media and modern communication systems and whose pervasive nature has been dynamically influenced by the development of modern technologies in the internationalisation process.

Sport is played in front of an audience in a "theatre" of some kind, be it a stadium, arena, golf course, track and field, or the open road with provision for the public. The mass media, which include print (newspapers and magazines) and electronic (radio and television), perform the following functions:

1. collecting and distributing information (news function)
2. interpretation of information and norms of behaviour
3. transmission of knowledge, values, and social norms from generation to generation (educational function) entertainment;

Nwabuwe (2014) discovered a mutually beneficial relationship between sports and mainstream media. This is because much of sports' phenomenal growth can be attributed to the interaction between sports and the mainstream media. He noted that newspapers, radio, and television are driving the growth and entertainment value of sports such as football, boxing, wrestling, rugby, and athletics. Edim et al. (2016) emphasised the contribution of the media to the development of sports, noting that the outstanding talent, spectacle, and commercial value of sports would be achieved if the media did not continuously focus on sports events and competitions. I pointed out that it would not have been done.

Amuchie, cited by Nwabuwe (2014), opined that the media benefits enormously from sports by publishing exciting sports stories that attract readers, thus enabling newspapers and magazines to maintain or increase circulation. Most newspapers, observably, put some of their most talented cartoonists and writers on the sports page since most newspaper readers unconsciously go straight to the sports page before reading the political news, even though the sports page

takes a back seat even behind obituaries. Similarly, Enos (2022) believes that media coverage of sports aids sports development by generating funds, increasing global awareness of sports and their image through increased spectatorship, and improving the quality of sports while increasing revenue generation, visibility, popularity, and participation in sports.

The Australian Sports Commission (2013) opines that sports have grown into a big business that attracts the attention of newspaper editors, radio commentators, and television anchormen, with the sports section becoming a major part of the newspaper daily. They also discovered that, in contrast to radio and television, “newspapers influence audience engagement in sports in every community because of their ability to communicate sports in a variety of ways,” earn services, and predict game outcomes.” It is worth noting that the advertising and promotional aspects of this sport are enabled by the mass media highlighting the content of the game. Montag et al. (2013) argue that sports media activity is undertaken to convey and transmit messages from sports organisations or the media themselves to an audience and that the primary task is to impart knowledge, skills, attributes, and information. They also found that encouraging participation in physical activity, usually through mainstream media, and watching recreational sports offered by the media improved physical development. Kumar (2018) and Umukoro et al., (2020) also found that the media has the ability to significantly influence the character and development of sports, despite the resistance of athletes and sports organisations to commodification.

Television has become the showpiece of the media as it captures the sound of the event during recording and is capable of live coverage of distant sporting events like the Nigeria National Sports Festival, Commonwealth Games, All African Games, African Cup of Nations, UEFA Leagues, and Champions Leagues, which are watched live all over the world. Sports have become a major interest in Nigerian society today, with virtually all the media talking about sports events. It is noteworthy to mention that Delta State has topped the medal table in most of the national sports festivals organised (Akarah et al., 2019). The following performances by Team Delta were highlighted in the last three editions of the National Sports Festival: At the 19th edition hosted in Abuja in 2018, Delta State came first with a total of 352 medals comprised of 163 gold, 88 silver, and 101 bronze. At the 20th edition hosted by Edo State, tagged “Edo 2020,”

organised in 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, Delta State came first with a total of 384 medals comprised of 158 gold, 88 silver, and 101 bronze.

2. RESEARCH RATIONALE

Over the years, Delta State University's achievements in athletics, especially at the National Athletic Festival, have been outstanding. Over the past three editions (19th, 20th, and 21st), the total number of medals won and overall rankings in each medal category have increased significantly. It is undeniable that funding has played a major role in our long-term performance. Delta recognises the significant level of active and passive participation (players and spectators), awareness, and popularity of sports that determine the level of performance at sports festivals. We have no doubts about this. Therefore, the level of skill is a trend that can increase the possibility of developing sports in a standing position. For these reasons, the purpose of this research is to determine how much media coverage of sporting events has contributed to the development of sports in Delta State.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study with a population of five hundred and ninety-three (593) comprised of nineteen (19) sports writers, nineteen (19) sports journalists, two hundred and three (203) coaches, three hundred and twenty-six (326) athletes, and twenty-six (26) organising secretaries in Delta State (Source: Delta State Union of Journalists Secretariat, Delta State Sports Commission, Asaba), from which a sample size of three hundred and eighteen (329) was obtained. The sports writers, sports journalists, and sports organisers were purposefully sampled since the population was small, while 50% of coaches and athletes were randomly sampled through balloting. A 15-item self-structured questionnaire with a reliability index (r) of 0.75 and scaled on a modified four-(4) point Likert type rating of “very high” (VH 4), “high” (H 3), “low” (L 2), and “very low” (VL 1). Using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient, its face and content validity were assessed by three experts in the Department of Human Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sports Science Education at Delta State University, with data generated by Abraka, which was used for an average reference value of 2.50 to determine the swelling value.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were posed to guide this study.

1. To what extent does the media cover Delta's sporting events?

1. Table 1: Extent to which mass media cover sports events in Delta State N = 329

Item	VH	H	L	VL	Mean	Decision
The extent of media coverage of sports events is	98 (30%)	166 (50%)	40 (12%)	25 (8%)	3.02	High
The extent of live radio coverage of sports events is	74 (23%)	158 (48%)	50 (15%)	47 (14%)	2.80	High
The extent of newspaper reporting of sports events is	82 (25%)	160 (49%)	47 (14%)	40 (12%)	2.86	High
The extent of live television coverage of sports events is	102 (31%)	168 (51%)	43 (13%)	16 (5%)	3.08	High
Grand Mean	89 (27.1%)	163 (49.5%)	45 (13.7%)	32 (9.7%)	2.94	High

Table 1 shows the responses on extent to which mass media cover sports events in Delta State. The table shows that 89 (27.1%) of the respondents responded a very high to which the mass media cover sports events in Delta State, 163 (49.5%) responded a high extent, 45 (13.7%) responded a low extent while 32 (9.7%) responded a very low extent with a grand mean value

of 2.94. Since the grand mean value of 2.94 is higher than the criterion mean value of 2.50, the research question 1 was thus answered that; the mass media cover sports events in Delta State to a high extent. To what extent has the mass media contributed to sports development in Delta State?

Table 2: Extent to which mass media contributed to sports development in Delta State

N = 329

Item	VH	H	L	VL	Mean	Decision
The extent to which there is sports events awareness through the mass media is	142 (43%)	164 (50%)	18 (5.5%)	5 (1.5%)	3.35	High
The extent of participation in sports by individuals from the mass media reportage is	102 (31%)	185 (56%)	26 (8%)	16 (5%)	3.09	High
The extent of sports earnings at sports event venues is	98 (30%)	201 (61%)	8 (2%)	22 (7%)	3.14	High
The extent of sports facilities advertisement the mass media is	74 (22%)	193 (59%)	26 (8%)	36 (11%)	2.93	High
The extent of sports events advertisement by mass media is	113 (34.3%)	211 (64.1%)	4 (1.2%)	1 (0.3%)	3.33	High
The extent to which the mass media dedicate airtime to sports is	86 (26%)	166 (51%)	30 (9%)	47 (14%)	2.88	High
Grand Mean	103 (31.3%)	186 (56.5%)	19 (5.8%)	21 (6.4%)	3.12	High

Table 2 shows the responses on extent to which mass media has contributed to sports development in Delta State. The table shows that 103 (31.3%) of the respondents responded a very high to which the mass

media has contributed to sports development in Delta State, 186 (56.5%) responded a high extent, 19 (5.8%) responded a low extent while 21 (6.4%) responded a very low extent with a grand mean value of 3.12. Since

the grand mean value of 3.12 is higher than the criterion mean value of 2.50, the research question 2 was thus answered that; the mass media has contributed to sports development in Delta State to a high extent.

5. DISCUSSION

Delta State has recorded remarkable performances in sports competitions at the National Sports Festivals over the years, with increases in the total number of medals won in each of the medal categories as well as in the overall placement, especially in the last three editions (19th, 20th, and 21st). The study thus sought to ascertain the extent to which the mass media has impacted on sports development in the state.

The findings of the study revealed that the mass media cover sports events in Delta State to a high extent. This finding is supported by Nwabuwe (2014), who attributed the symbiotic relationship between sports and the mass media to the phenomenal growth in such sports as football, boxing, wrestling, rugby, and athletics in addition to their entertainment value. Edim et al. (2016) also supported this finding when they noted that the extraordinary talents, entertainment, and commercial worth of sports would not have been accomplished without the media continually focusing its attention on sporting events and competitions.

The study's findings also revealed that the mass media has made a significant contribution to the development of sports in Delta State. This finding is supported by Mona et al. (2013), who noted that sports development is usually enhanced through being encouraged to participate in physical activities via the mass media or through recreational watching of sports, for which the media affords the opportunity through transferring knowledge, skills, attributes, and information. The finding is also supported by Kumar (2018), who noted that despite evidence of resistance to commodification from sportspersons and sports bodies, the media has a substantial capability to influence the characters and development of sports. Eime et al. (2016) also support the findings when they note that the sports industry generated over \$7 billion in 2017 with the involvement of over 59 million fantasy football users, courtesy of mass media participation.

6. CONCLUSION

The mass media coverage has impacted sports development in Delta State to a very high extent, thus accounting for one of the prominent factors

attributable to the performances recorded by the state in such sports outings as the National Sports Festival. The mass media has also created a heightened level of awareness among the citizens about the available facilities for recreational activities and the need for participation.

7. RECOMMENDATION

It would be pertinent for the Delta State government to open up more vistas for mass media participation while ensuring that the sports development policy would include creating more outlets for generating revenue through sports by organising more sports competitions as well as establishing more recreational outlets at the local government level to enable the sports sector to make increased contributions to national economic and social development.

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