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PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES: A PANACEA FOR SPORTS DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Y. O. ABDULRAHEEM, M. ABDULRAHEEM & Y. I. AJEIGBE

Abstract

Creating awareness for sports development is low in Nigeria compared to developed countries. Sports are social events that bring together different people with different background languages and religion in Nigeria and they are social events that keep the country united. The paper explains how promotional strategies can be used to influence Sports development in Nigeria. Factors considered include advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and internet marketing. Based upon the functions performed by sports, this paper, recommends that sports administrators and sport officials should adopt promotional strategies in creating proper awareness for sporting activities.

Keywords: *Promotional strategies, Sports, Awareness, Sport development.*

Introduction

The relevant of sports to human survival cannot be over emphasized because sports are required for people to be healthy and fit. Throughout history people are very much interested in their physical body; people love themselves no matter how beautiful or ugly they are (Melih, 2008). Scientific evidence supports the concept that regular physical exercises programme have significant and perceivable benefits for the health of every individual (Venkatswarlu, 2009). They are required for our daily lives for both competition and recreational activities. Within the excitement and enjoyment of sports, countries are able to compete in the international arena for laurels and glory of their nation.

Sports are also the huge marked for countries economy, looking at only football industry, there are more than a thousand professional teams and at least these team have 25 players (Melih, 2008). If these are calculated, there are approximately 25,000 players without, scouts, coaches and managers. This is one of the largest industry that employs people (Melih, 2008). According to the president of Nigeria (2015) as cited by Onochei (2015) recognizes that sports are great employer of labour and would like to explore the opportunities sports could avail the economy especially in terms of employment. Despite the usefulness of sports to national development, sports development in Nigeria society is still low, many people seem not to know the benefits sports offer. The sports development in Nigeria society is still at the crawling stage due to factors like unawareness, inadequate facilities and equipment, trainings and unqualified sports administrators.

There is no enough awareness about sports development in Nigeria. Reports have

shown that there are many people who do sports for nothing, they seem not to know the reasons for sporting activities (Melih, 2008). According to Brachoo (2012) we live in a world where every minute of every day someone, somewhere is engaging in sports. Yet there are many arguments that sports play a pivotal role in the way countries are developed (Brachoo, 2012). This could mean only two things; either countries are not marketing sports properly or governments are not investing in their sports fraternities wisely. It is in the light of the above that the study is designed to investigate the influence of promotional strategies on sports development in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Sports development cannot be ignored by any nation that wants to stand the test of time. A situation where people abandon active and vigorous sporting life, in the country does not add value to the health of the nation. These individuals are presumably unfit to adequately cope with word related stress. Sport administrators must be able to create awareness on the benefits of sporting activities through the use of promotional strategies to reach out to individuals and corporate bodies. It is not just enough for sports administrators to rely on the government for development of sports in the nation but reaching out to every Nigerian should be of great concern. With the little effort being made in creating awareness by sports administrators, many Nigerians are still not aware of the benefits of sporting activities to the nation. In all countries of the world, the importance of sports as a source of physical well being, and also an element that can help combating social-cultural imbalance is growing day by day (Bruno; 2014). Unfortunately sports administrators in Nigeria have not been making use of the available promotional tools to reach out to people.

Conceptual Framework

Sport are social events that bring together different people with different background, languages and religion. Sports in Nigeria are social events that keep the country united. Sports according to Olajide (2003) are institutionalized physical activities which operate by rules fixed externally. He describes sports as activities with clear standard of performance involving physical exertion through competition, governed by norms, definitions and relationships, typically performed by members of organized groups, with the goal of achieving some rewards through defeat of other competitors.

Augustine (2003) sees sports as all form of physical activities which casual organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness, mental well-being, forming social relationships, or obtaining results in competition at all levels including recreational play, organized casual or competition sports and indigenous sports or games. Sporting activities should be included in the school's curriculum right from primary level to tertiary institution; as this will serve as an instrument for promoting unity and hence enhances the development of sports in Nigeria. In the same vein Ajeigbe and Abubakar (2007) see sports as a natural part of children's life, whether it is competing for medals or just for recreational purpose.

Many governments invest in sports with an aim of leveraging the positive societal, economic and cultural benefits for individuals and their communities. (Ralph, 2005). Sports, undoubtedly, have always been a major unifying factor for Nigerians. The Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba people belonging to different geographical entities see themselves as one during sporting activities. Sports enhance people's unity, togetherness and cohesion greatly (Hussain, 2015).

Nigerian participation in sports dates back to the 1950s. Nigeria had its first appearance on the Helsinki Olympic Games 1952, and its first victory in 1954, when Emmanuel Ifeajuna won a gold medal in the High Jump at the common wealth games in Cardiff. In 1962, the National Sports Council was set up and in 1971, the National Sports Commission was established with the following objectives:

- i. To coordinate and integrate efforts to raise the standard of performance in sport in Nigeria.
- ii. To encourage the development, organization and participation of sports in Nigeria.
- iii. To make arrangements on behalf of the states, Sports councils for competitions, Technical assistance, recruitment of coaches and for any other matters as the commission deems fit.
- iv. To promote physical fitness and general well-being of all persons in Nigeria (Ajiboye, 2009).

In terms of football, the Nigeria football Federation was created in 1945. It was the first year that a competition was organized bringing together clubs from Lagos, Port Harcourt and Calabar. The championship was also renamed the challenge cup replacing the Governor's Cup as it had been known under their British colonizers. It was only several years later that the challenge cup became a national trophy when other top clubs from different provinces were invited to play. However, the clubs had to wait till 1990 for the professional league to be introduced. The sports played in Nigeria today include: Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Baseball, Boxing, Chess, Cricket, Cycling, football, Gymnastics, Golf, Handball, Hockey, Judo, Lawn Tennis, Rowing, Shooting, Squash Rackets, Swimming, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Volleyball, Weight-Lifting and Wrestling. (Ajiboye, 2009).

Ayodeji (2012) stated that instead of subscribing to drugs, violence and restiveness, the energies of idle youths can be reserved for good use in sporting activities. Sports provide a healthy platform for youthful competition and encourage the participation of young people in nation building. Morgan (2014) identified the following importance of sports:

i. Physical Benefits of sports:

Playing sports can make you stronger and healthier, contributing to lower obesity rates. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human services as cited by Morgan (2014), Athletes tend to have lower body mass indexes, but non-athlete

participants will still benefit from developing muscles and burning calories. Active people tend to have lower rates of diabetes and high blood pressure. Exercising regularly through sports programme could contribute to better heart and lung function.

ii. **Contributing to Academic Success:**

People who play sports tend to perform better at school. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that student athletes earn higher grades and earn higher test scores on standardized tests. They also have lower dropout rates and a better chance of getting into college.

iii. **Building Character Values:**

Sports also play the important role of imparting characters values, according to Sport and Development Organization. Playing sports can help teach honesty, teamwork and fair play. Learning to follow rules and respecting teammates and opponents can also be useful. Experiencing the role of a graceful winner and loser teaches people about being humble, and competition in general can teach individuals about self respect, confidence and managing stress. Taking on leading roles within team can also teach leadership.

The Problem with Nigeria's Sports Development

Nigerians, especially sports officials and administrators to whom responsibilities have been entrusted to, have always done harm to the development of the nation's sporting institutions rather than the other wise. Ogbili (2012) opined that the national sporting leaders don't take cues from the sporting programmes of the Americans and Chinese, the sporting prowess, talents and passion for which the black race is known for is slowly ebbing out of the country. He added that the performance of Nigerian athletes in the London 2012 Olympics game was a revealer of sorts and the point which glaringly proves that one can reap only what one sow was evidently portrayed by Team Nigerian Athletes. Speaking further, he said with the exception of police & NSCDC no governmental organization neither private corporations has done enough to promote and develop sports in Nigeria.

Ademola (2014) identified the following as factors affecting the development of sports in Nigeria.

- i. Corruption
- ii. Inadequate funding
- iii. Poor state of sporting facilities
- iv. Inadequate sponsorship and advertisement
- v. Inadequate wages for professional athletes in Nigeria.
- vi. Government policies
- vii. Use of unqualified and untrained sports' administrators as head of sports federation
- viii. Attention on one sports only (Football) while abandoning others.
- xi. State of the Nation (A developing country)

Factors That Could Lead to Better Sports Development.

- i. **Creating Awareness:** Awareness is a very important factor that must be given proper consideration. Any individual or organization that has something to offer must create awareness, it is through awareness that people get to know the existence of a particular product or services. Sports administrators & officials must be able to create proper awareness by letting people know the importance and benefits of sports to human and national development.
- ii. **Facilities and Equipment:** For successful execution of any sporting programmes, the provision of adequate and standard facilities and equipment cannot be ignored. Bucher (2001) stated that there are many different sources for purchasing equipment. Many grades and qualities of materials are available. Also, many methods of storing and maintaining such merchandise are prevalent. To achieve greater value for the money, basic principles of purchasing facilities and equipment need to be understood. Obiyemi, Adesoye and Ogunsanwo (2002) emphasized the importance of quality facilities and equipment. They explained that facilities and equipment play vital roles in the development and organization of sports in any developed and developing society.
- iii. **Training and Programmes:** Training and programmes are crucial to the development of sports in Nigeria. It is fruitful to sporting individuals and the nation at large. Individuals engage in sporting activities will become more efficient and productive if well trained. Programmes are implemented and achieved through training which involve the preparation of the individuals for sports competitions.
- iv. **Motivation:** According to John (2010), Motivation is the set of attitude that predisposes a person to act in a specific goal-directed way. He further said that motivation is thus an inner state that energizes channels and sustains human behaviour to achieve goals. One can deduce that motivation refers to the intrinsic and extrinsic drives or desires that cause a push people to behave in a certain way in order to accomplish a goal. Motivation is one of the ways to change the negative perception of people about sports. There is a kind of insensitivity on the part of sports administrators that discourages sports participants and participation, thereby affecting the development of sports organization and participation. Motivation should be provided for sports participants, sports administrators and officials for better performance.
- v. **Qualified Sports Administrators :** The functions of any management theme is to plan, organize, direct, guide, coordinate, motivate, evaluate, and control the affairs of the theme. Qualified sports administration will be able to carry out this function accordingly and contribute to sports development. Ladani (2007) stated that good sports personnel or administrators should be creative in their decision making. Sports administrators must therefore be sincerely interested in their jobs.

Concept of Promotional Strategies

Promotion is any form of communication a business or organization uses to inform, persuade, or remind people about its products (Lois, Grady and Carl, 2002). Promotional strategies are specific blend of promotion tools that company uses to persuasively communicate customer value and build customer relationship (Kotler and Armstrong, 2014). There are five basic types of promotional strategy: Advertising, Sales promotion, Personal Selling, Public relations and internet marketing.

Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsors (Lois et al, 2002) Advertising can be found everywhere, from magazines and newspapers to television and websites. It attempts to create a favourable impression and goodwill for a business or an organization. It does this by providing positive information about a business and allows large numbers of people to see the advertiser's message. The main purpose of advertising is to present a message that encourages the customer to buy a product or accept an idea. Sports administrators need to create awareness about sports using advertisement to support and supplement their programmes.

Sales Promotion are short term incentives to encourage the purchase or sale of a product or serves (Kotler & Armstrong 2014) Sales promotions can be use by sport administrators to ginger the young ones to participate in sporting activities . They can organize programmes by providing incentives to the best ones at the end of the event. This can stimulate the interest of people and in turn lead to sports development.

Public relations refer to any activity designed to create a favourable image towards a business, its products, or its polices (Lois et al, 2002). It helps to build good relations with company's various publics by obtaining favourable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories and events. Publicity differs from advertising as a promotional tool because it is free Sports Administrators can create proper awareness of the benefits and importance of sports to national development through public relations. They can organize programmes that will catch the attention of media administrators to help in creating publicity for such programmes.

Personal Selling is a personal presentation by the firm's sales force for the purpose of making sales and building customer relationships (Armstrong and Kotler 2005). Personal selling is the most useful communication tool at certain stages of the buying process, particularly in building buyer's first choice. The level of ignorance as to the benefits of sport development is still on the increase. Sports administrators can make use of personal selling to promote awareness for sporting activities.

Internet Marketing is the use of internet to communicate directly with or solicit responses or dialogues from people. The internet is becoming the most important

driver of strategic change for business and national government. Internet is perceived as a valuable resource knowledge, entertainment, opportunity to make friend and expand one's network and also to open up new career opportunities. Sports administrators can judiciously make use of the available internet tools to reach out to people. They can make use of tools like twitters, Blogs, Facebook, Youtube, Google+ and other for creating effective awareness for sporting activities and the benefits people tend to derive from it. Joyson (2013) stated that internet sites like facebook, twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ have become the epicenter for marketing campaign for many organizations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In today's competitive environment, using effective communication medium to create awareness is crucial to every individual or organization that has something to offer. Individuals or organizations that clearly communicate their marketing messages using the appropriate medium are likely to be successful in today's environment. There are different methods to create awareness; we have various traditional mediums of communication such as television, radio print et.c and the internet. It was concluded that sports administrators and sport officials should put promotional strategies into consideration in creating awareness. The following recommendations were made:

- i. Sports administrators and sports officials should make use of the promotional strategy or strategies that best fit their operations.
- ii. Sports administrators and sports officials should create proper awareness of sporting activities using promotional strategies.
- iii. Sports administrators and sports officials should adopt promotional strategies to maintain goodwill and mutual understanding with the public.
- iv. Government should develop the interest of the citizens in sporting activities by organizing campaigns and lectures to signify the importance of sports development to the nation at large.

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