

Strategies for Sports Products and Place Management Adopted by Football Club Operators in South-South Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated strategies for sports products and place management adopted by football club operators in south-south, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population as well as sample for the study was 450 football club operators. A structured questionnaire titled strategies for sports product and place management questionnaire (SSPPMQ) was used for data collection. The reliability co-efficient of 0.77 was established through test-retest method using Pearson product moment correlation. The generated data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions, while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. The findings of the study revealed that, some of the sports products management strategies such as provision of quality sports equipment for sports consumers and sales of quality sports items were not adopted by football club operators in south-south Nigeria. The findings also showed that, some of the sports place management strategies include adequate parking space, clean environment and the lightning inside and around the stadium were not adopted by football club operators in south-south Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that, sports products should be regulated by sports ministries and the club management should provide adequate parking space, clean environment and the lightning inside and around the stadium.*

KEYWORDS: football club operators, marketing mix, sports products, sports place, strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Sports as social entity have grown from being just as a form of entertainment and recreational activity to assume a professional status with competitiveness. Sports

develop individuals, society and nations. It is a big time business venture shaping the social, political and economic constructs of nations (Danjuma, 2017). Globally, sports is made up as action that involve the body as distinguished from the mind or spirit by coordinated involvement, with the intention to assert physical power. Sports is seen as an instrument being used by individuals or government to market sports products and services to the populace with some marketing mix to meet the needs and desires of consumers. Sport marketing is the application of marketing concepts to sport products and services, and the marketing of non-sports products through an association with sport. Like other forms of marketing, sport marketing seeks to fulfill the needs and wants of consumers. It achieves this by providing sport services and sport-related products to consumers. However, sport marketing is unlike conventional marketing in that it also has the ability to encourage the consumption of non-sport products and services by association. Kotler and Armstrong (2014) defined marketing mix as the set of controllable marketing variables that the firm blends to produce the response of wants in the target market. Sports marketing mix management strategies are those strategies which help to manage the sports marketing mix in other to satisfy sports consumers.

The traditional marketing mix include product, price, place, promotion were adopted in this study with emphasis on product and place. Football club operators need to manage these marketing mix for sports consumers' satisfaction. Football club operators are individuals responsible for running a football club. They are in-charge of managing the affairs of the football club which includes: recruitment, training, coaching, and registration of all players in the football clubs. They include football players, staff, managers, coaches, club owners (Zimbalist, 2013). This study covered sports products and place. Product in the marketing mix can be referred to as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). Mammon (2012) indicated that among marketing mix elements, product significantly influences customer satisfaction. Among the forms of product, services are considered more special to pay attention to because of its importance in the world economy.

Services consist of activities, benefits, or satisfactions offered for sale that are essentially intangible and do not result in the ownership of anything. There are three levels in making decisions for any products or services. Kotler and Armstrong (2014) defined product as anything tangible or intangible offered to a market for attention, use and consumption with aim of satisfying needs and wants of customers in this definition they consider product to include services. It is easy to think of the word product as referring to a physical, manufactured item. However, the term product can also refer to services, people, places, ideas and the benefits that a sport organization offers consumers. Many sport organizations offer a service, such as a form of physical activity, entertainment or an experience. There is often no physical product to take away, but a sport organization might offer some intangible benefits such as lifestyle, social group or even a belief system. The product can also include design, packaging and merchandise. Product is everything that companies provide for their customers. It

can mean a physical object which customer can see and touch or it can mean service, ideas, almost anything. Service means multiple different issues. It can be a personal service or service as a product but always it is something that can be bought and sold but it cannot be experienced as concrete (Gummesson, & Grönroos 2012).

Sports place refers to the location or venue of the sports such as stadium or arena, the point of origin for distributing the product, ticket sales at the stadium, sales by a toll-free telephone number, or internet, the geographic location of the target markets global, national, regional, state, communities, cities and other channels that are important to consider regarding whether consumers may access the product such as time, day, season, or month in which a product is offered, as well as the media distribution outlets consumers may use to receive the product experience.

Kotler and Armstrong (2014) defined marketing channel (distribution channel) as a set of interdependent organizations that help make a product or service available for user or consumption by the consumer or business user. In distribution channel, there are third party companies who act as the wholesaler, transporter, and retailer: the intermediaries. The basic role of the intermediaries is simplifying the channel transactions by reducing the total amount of works that the producers and consumers supposed to do. Retail location strategy can be divided into two broad areas i.e. the market factors and the operative factors (Khan, 2011). Market factors are those relating to the potential of the location for attracting consumers and enhancing sales, while operative are more related to the effort involved in opening and operating the business. A strategic location allows easy access, attracts a larger number of customers, and increase potential sales of a retail outlet. Thus accessibility affects catchment population of a stadium (Kocaili, 2010).

In today's highly competitive environment, choosing the correct site location for event is among the top factors in determining that outlet's success or failure. Maximizing sales is a primary objective for retailers, hence, finding the perfect site location that will facilitate consumption and customer's satisfaction, is of key importance (Saxena, 2011).

Factors related to the physical location of the sport can have a favorable or unfavorable effect on the marketing plan. To ensure a favorable effect, the sport facility must be easily accessible highway systems, parking, walkways, and ramps. It must have attractive physical appearance, well maintained and painted, have a pleasant, convenient, and functional environment, quick and easy access to concessions, clean rest rooms, smoke free and odor free environment and have safe and pleasant surroundings, adequate public safety and security personnel, and attractive neighborhood.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is a football loving nation that has been involved in the operation of football clubs for years. Most sports consumers complain of the quality of sports products and

services offered to them. Again, lack of adequate parking space, water logged pitches, poor lighting inside and around the stadium have been observed in or around stadia, leading to dissatisfaction of sports consumers. It is necessary to establish how football club operators managed sports products and place. Hence, the need for the present study.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study investigated strategies for sports products and place management adopted by football club operators in south-south Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives were to:

1. determine the sports products management strategies adopted by football club operators in south-south Nigeria; and,
2. ascertain the sports place management strategies adopted by football club operators in south-south Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the sports products management strategies adopted by football club operators in south-south Nigeria?
2. What are the sports place management strategies adopted by football club operators in south-south Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study at 0.05 alpha level.

1. There is no significant difference in the sports products management strategies adopted by football clubs operators in south-south Nigeria based on type of ownership (Government /private).
2. There is no significant difference in the sports place management strategies adopted by football clubs operators in south-south Nigeria based on the club type (national / premier league).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study, Elendu, (2010) noted that descriptive survey design investigates, studies, describes events, behaviour as they occur in their natural settings at a particular time.

Population for the Study

The study used accessible population of 450 sports club operators for this study as presented in the table below.

Population of the Study

S/N	CLUB OPERATORS	POPULATION
1	Head Coaches	6
2	Assistant Coaches	12
3	Fitness Trainers	30
4	Kits and Equipment Managers	14
5	Managers	12
6	Secretaries	15
7	Welfare Officers	45
8	Media crews	12
9	Chairmen	12
10	Players	250
11	Medical Teams	30
12	Supporters group chairmen	12
	Total	450

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size of the study is 450 football club operators. The entire population was used for the study because the population is manageable and relatively small. This is in line with Elendu, (2010) who explained that it is appropriate to study the entire population, when the population to be studied is small and manageable.

Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire contains introductory statement and instruction on purpose of the instrument and how to fill the questionnaire, this instrument is be made up of two (2) sections, section A which elicits demographic data such as years of football experience, level of education, age, gender and marital status. While section B contains information on the strategies for sports products and place management among football club operators in south-south Nigeria. The questionnaire is a modified Likert-type on a four point rating of Strongly Agree (SA) (4points), Agree (A) (3points), Disagree(D) (2points) and Strongly Disagree (SD) (1point).

Validity of the Instrument

The face and content validity of the questionnaire were established by three experts in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Their comments, suggestions and contributions were considered in producing the final draft of the questionnaire.

Reliability of the Instrument

Test-retest method was used to establish co-efficient of 0.77 using Pearson product moment correlation after administering the validated instrument to twenty (20) sports club operators in Anambra State, South-eastern part of Nigeria. After two weeks interval the same questionnaire were re-administered to same respondents. Each of The subscale reliability co-efficient of 0.72 for sports product and 0.82 for sports place

were established using Cronbach alpha. Hence, the instrument was considered to be reliable

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected with the aid of six (6) trained research assistants. They were used to ensure proper distribution of copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. A total number of four hundred and fifty (450) copies of questionnaire were administered but four hundred and thirty nine (439) were correctly filled and returned. This translated into 98.0 per cent return rate.

Method of Data Analysis

The completed copies of the questionnaire were collated, coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used for research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the sports products management strategies adopted by sports club operators in south-south Nigeria?

Table 1: Sports products management strategies adopted by sports club operators

S/N	Statements	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1	Quality sports equipment is provided for sports consumers	2.31	0.98	Not a strategy
2	Stores for sports items are well sited and arranged.	2.70	1.01	Strategy
3	Quality sports items are offered for sales.	1.83	1.03	Not a strategy
Grand mean		2.28	1.01	

Data in Table 1 indicated that the respondents disagreed that all identified items except well-sited and arranged sports stores with mean and standard deviation scores of 2.70 and 1.01 respectively above the criterion mean as strategies adopted by sports club operators in southern Nigeria. The grand mean of 2.28, implies that some of the sports products management strategies are not adopted by sports club operators in south-south Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What are the sports place management strategies adopted by sports club operators in south-south Nigeria?

Table 2: Sports place management strategies adopted by sports club operators

S/N	Statements	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1	Adequate parking space is provided in and around the stadium.	2.07	1.06	Not a strategy
2	The stadium is well ventilated for consumer satisfaction	2.90	1.07	Strategy
3	Adequate drainage system is provided to avoid water on ditches.	2.82	0.92	Strategy
4	The stadium is always kept clean for consumer's satisfaction.	2.41	1.13	Not a strategy
5	Free flow of human movement is assured to the sports consumers.	2.74	0.78	Strategy
6	The lighting inside and around the stadium is ultimately enough to encourage consumers satisfaction.	1.69	1.00	Not a strategy
Grand mean		2.44	0.99	

The data in Table 2 indicated that respondents agreed that the sports place management strategies adopted by sports club operators includes well ventilated stadium for consumer satisfaction, provision of adequate drainage system to avoid water on ditches and assurance of free flow of human movement to sports consumers with mean scores of 2.90, 2.82, and 2.74 respectively. On the other hand, the respondents disagreed that adequate parking space is provided in and around the stadium, the stadium is always kept clean for consumers satisfaction and the lighting inside and around the stadium is ultimately enough to encourage consumers satisfaction with mean scores of 2.07, 2.41 and 1.69 below the criterion mean. The grand mean of 2.44, means that some of the sports place management strategies are not adopted by sports club operators in south-south Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the marketing mix management among football clubs operators in south-south Nigeria base on type of ownership (Government /private)

Table 3: Z-test analysis on the marketing mix management among football club operators based on the club owner

Variables	\bar{x}	SD	n	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Pvalue	Sig level	Decision
Government	2.49	.32	236	437	2.45	± 1.960	0.015	0.05	Rejected
Private	2.41	.33	203						

The data in table 3 above showed that the calculated z-value of 2.45 is greater than the critical value of ± 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level. The null hypothesis was rejected. It implies that there is a significant difference in the marketing mix management among football clubs operators in south-south Nigeria base on the club owners.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the marketing mix management among football club operators in south-south Nigeria base on the club type.

Table 4: Z-test analysis on the marketing mix management among football club operators base on the club type

Variables	\bar{x}	SD	n	Df	z-cal.	z-crit	p-value	Sig level	Decision
National Leagues clubs	2.45	.32	169	437	0.240	± 1.960	0.810	0.05	Retained
Premier Leagues clubs	2.46	.34	270						

The data in table 4 above showed that the calculated z-value of 0.240 is less than the critical value of ± 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level. The null hypothesis was retained. This means that there is no significant difference in the marketing mix management among football clubs operators in south-south Nigeria base on the club type.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. It revealed that some of the sports products management strategies such as provision of quality sports equipment sports consumers and sales of quality sports items were not adopted by football club operators in south-south Nigeria.
2. Some of the sports place management strategies, adequate parking space, clean environment and the lighting inside and around the stadium were not adopted by football club operators in south-south Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It is surprising to found out that provision of quality sports equipment for sports consumers, sales of quality sports items, adequate parking space, clean environment and lightning inside and around the stadium were not adopted by football club operators. This is in agreement with Charumbira (2014). According to him, Zimbabwean sports federations are using inappropriate and ineffective sports marketing strategies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, football club operators rarely adopt sports products and place management strategies. There is no significant difference in the sports

products and place management strategies among football clubs operators in south-south Nigeria based on the club type and club owner.

Recommendations

It was recommended that:

1. Quality sports equipment and items should be provided as a means of encouraging sports consumers.
2. Football club operators should adopt effective and appropriate strategies to manage sports products for sports consumers' satisfaction.
3. The Ministry of sports should ensure that football clubs adopt strategies to manage sports place for safety, security and satisfaction of the sports persons.
4. Adequate parking space is provided in and around the stadium by the stadia authority.
5. The sports environment should be kept clean to attract sports consumers.

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