

# J O R H A S S



Volume 10 No 1 July, 2010

ISSN 1118-616X

# Journal of Research in Health And Sports Science



Official Journal of the Department  
of Physical & Health Education of  
Bayero University, Kano - Nigeria



**SPORTS AND TOURISM MUTUALLY ENHANCE SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT:  
BEYOND MERE RHETORIC FOR NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*This article is anchored on twin pillars – (i) the acknowledgement that actually sports and tourism can mutually enhance societal development; and (ii) the fear that Nigeria is where nothing seems to work. Pivoted by the functionalist theory and driven largely by secondary data and the active participation of the authors in sports activities, the work has pointed out corruption, poor education, discrimination against the physically challenged, overreliance on imported materials, lack of comprehensive national policies on sports and tourism as the problem areas. It has also proffered comprehensive national policies, overbearing influence of government, vigilance against corruption, interest in disabled sports, improved education, institutional reorganization, reduction of government's direct influence/greater involvement of the private sector, and respect for national sports and tourism facilities as recommendations. It concludes that the state of sports and tourism in the country is sordid (but with great potentials) and that unless the recommendations are accorded serious attention, the development promises inherent in the sports-tourism interaction may well remain a mirage in the Nigerian context.*

**Introduction**

Nigeria appears to be impervious to government developmental efforts. Most programmes intended for development, have successfully (sic) failed (Ukpong, 2004). It should, however, be noted that the challenges of development require concerted and collaborative efforts (Ekong, 2003; Ake, 1996; and Brown, 2000). It thus becomes imperative for firms, industries, institutions, disciplines and cultures to converge. This need for convergence informed the choice of "Sports and tourism Mutually Enhance Societal Development" as the theme for the 2004 World Tourism Day Celebrations (Okungbowa 2004; Frangialli & Rogge, 2004).

Undoubtedly, the potency of the tourism/sports interact suggests a social good. However, there are doubts if Nigeria can actually translate these potentials into societal development. The challenge of making this relationship work for Nigeria explains the need for this work. It is pertinent to note here that this work has benefited immensely from the authors' long-term and active involvement in the administration, organization, management, and other activities. Thus, observation, library research, and content analysis underscore the methodology adopted in this work.

**Tourism, Sports And Development: Conceptual Issues**

Essentially, tourism is a travel industry (Heinemann, 1991) and its bearing is basically cultural. It is thus a multi-faceted industry which touches on the natural environment; the museums and monuments, recreational activities, cultural heritage, hotels (Odudoye, 1998), Lottery (Lotto) activities, casinos, electronic and nutritional cafés, gymnasia, etc. It is international in character and basically involves: the purpose of embarking on tours; the mode of traveling; the facilities involved (Uchegbu, 2003); and the destinations. The variations of the socio-cultural, geographical and natural realities that abound in the globe have made the value of tourism priceless.

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Tourism potency is seen in the areas of social life (Momsen, 2004) and health (Ajayi 1997) as well as economic growth and development at the instance of combating poverty (Collins, 2004; and Babatunde, 2004). According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) *Bulletin* (1994), tourism is the third largest revenue earner after crude petroleum and automobiles globally. It has lately become the main stay of developing economies like Kenya and South Africa (Ondicho, 2004). But tourism can neither develop nor enhance development in the midst of palpable sense of internal insecurity (Moneke, 2004); political instability; low level of education and awareness; lack of infrastructural facilities, information and guides showcasing opportunities and communication systems (Ekong, 1997). There is also need for a strong domestic tourism (Okonkwo, 2004).

Being gender-spaced, Kinniard & Derek (1994) found out that women constitute an average of 46% percent of the labour force in the tourism industry. Though jobs specifics vary from one culture to another, women are largely maids, housekeepers, receptionists and they exploit their photogenic nature to benefit from tourism. They are largely service-oriented (Swaim & Momsen, 2002). Particularly encouraging to the third world economies is the fact that the overall characteristics of international tourism trend since the 1990s is that tourist destinations are rapidly diversifying (WTO, 1994). African economies are to some extent likely to record faster growth in the international tourist arrivals now than in the 1990s. This is because of the growing awareness of African tourism potentials and the relative stability of the polity (Ondicho, 2003).

In spite of the above potentials of tourism, it is sad to note that the African (Nigerian) situation is sordid as several factors militate against the thriving of the industry. Lack of tourism marketing strategy, a master plan (Aziza, 1998); promotion programmes, tourism development policy (Ondicho, 2003); as well as political instability, poor domestic base (Okonkwo, 2004); lack of entrepreneurs and data bank (Akinkugbe, 2002); and lack of impact assessment policy – a comprehensive one which covers health, environment, behaviour, (Uchegbu, 2000) all constitute impediments to tourism development.

Suffice it to state here that tourism is one specific industry that is not only capable of providing economic growth to nations and corporate bodies but also has the potentials for fostering understanding and much desired peace among nations and peoples; as well as enhancing social, psychological and emotional health. Put differently, economic development, international peace and understanding as well as individual well-being can be induced through the tourism industry (Ekong, 1997).

Tourism, therefore, could be seen as a catalyst for further industrialization and once a market has been created, it becomes spirally lingering without an end. In which case, the more tourists will be attracted to the area(s); the more services will be required. As a result, the entire area would become a bee-hive of economic activities to promote the economic and social well-being of the area and (with subtlety) enhance peace, understanding, tolerance, and hospitability among peoples (*A hand book on Akwa Ibom State*, 1991). Sports could complement a great deal. This is because sport involves a considerable amount of traveling to play and compete in different destinations, cultures and countries (Frangialli & Rogge, 2004). On the other hand, sport is a discipline, which attracts a blend of physical and mental competence for excellence in relation to other people. But Hess, Markson, & Stein (1992) see sports as important leisure activities in all societies – a source of entertainment and an expression of cultural values and themes. Sports are organized by set rules, and are not spontaneous expressions of the human impulse but a form of structured social behaviour with values, norms, statuses and roles.

Being multi-faceted, sports are closely tied to a lot of systems, processes and institutions. Such include: the educational, economic, age and racial systems (Eskenazi, 1989; Leonard & Rayman, 1990). Sports also border on violence, betting, and discomfort (Goldstein, 1988; & Hazelton 1989); Stratification and social mobility (Ashe, 1989; and Lapchick & Jackson, 1993); Gender (Messner, 1989, & Theberge, 1993); Freedom (Smith, 1988); Development and law (Bogopa, 2007; & Bamidele, 2004); Cultural Export (Ositelu, 2004); as well as tradition and Modernity (Guttman, 1978).

Sociologically sports are seen from multiple perspectives (Calhoun, Light, & Keller, 1997). This paper, however, adopts the functional theoretical perspective which holds that sports: provide learning experiences that socialize young people to become competitive, and patriotic role models who command respect; contribute to the adaptive needs of the social system by aiding the maintenance of people's physical well being; serve as safety valves for both participants and spectators, who are allowed to shed tension and aggressive energy in a socially acceptable way; and enhance social solidarity and world peace.

This paper is thus premised on the fact that the mutual collaboration of sports and tourism is functional to the development of the society. All these are aimed at development, which is the improved quality of all human lives in a society (Todaro, 1981). This is reached through a process by which people create and recreate themselves and their circumstances to realize higher levels of civilizations in accordance with their own choices and values (Ake, 1996). It thus calls for the people to confront their problem and attempt successfully to solve them and become able to control their environment (Ibode, 1989). Development, therefore, is a charge against poverty, unemployment, inequality, and dearth in social amenities and public utilities. This must, however, be recorded with a view to securing the future (Aina & Salau, 1992).

### **The Sports and Tourism Nexus**

As advanced by Frangialli & Rogge (2004), sport and tourism share common goals: building bridges of understanding between different cultures, lifestyles and traditions: promoting peace and goodwill among nations; motivating and inspiring young people and providing entertainment and enjoyment to relieve the pressures of daily life to large sections of the population. They further argue that sport and tourism are interrelated and complementary. Sport involves a considerable amount of travelling to play and compete in different destinations and countries. Major sporting events have become powerful tourism attractions in themselves thereby making a very positive contribution to the tourism image of the host destinations.

Thus, it could be argued that the two industries are powerful forces for development, stimulating investment in infrastructure projects such as airports, roads, stadia, sporting complexes, hospitals, hotels and restaurants. And once the infrastructure is in place, these two mutually beneficial industries become the motor for sustainable economic growth, the creation of employment and generation of revenues.

*"Frangialli & Rogge (2004) conclude sports and tourism are activities that bring people together and help forge strong personal relationships. In this way, they are making the world a smaller place – contributing to greater understanding among cultures, greater tolerance and ultimately, to world peace. It is on this note that the need to strengthen the links between tourism and sports arises. The end point will be societal development".*

### **Beyond Mere Rhetoric for Nigeria**

The development of Nigeria is primarily the responsibility of all Nigerians (Moneke, 2004). This is buttressed by the argument that government on its own cannot provide everything that every society needs but can be the catalyst through which private organizations are encouraged to take part in development efforts (Lukman, 1999). This, in relation to modernity points to the argument that the .... ***Overwhelming fact of modern life everywhere ... is not (just) the growth of the global economy, not the explosion of information technology and the internet, but the growing inter dependence these changes are bringing*** (Clinton, 2000).

Though sports development creates opportunities for individuals and communities by keeping the youths out of the streets, enhancing professionship and earning of living (Bogopa, 2001), its state of development in Nigeria leaves much to be desired (Williams, 2000). The problems include: poor financial base; lack of integrated national, grassroots – based development plan for youth (sport); lack of trained human capital; poor level of professionalism in sports administration; dearth of national sports centres; low level of private sector participation; over-bearing influence of government (unproductive government intervention); financial impropriety; unequal distribution of sports and recreational facilities; poor infrastructural base; lack of political will to host major international sporting events which would compel the authorities to the responsibility of providing necessary infrastructure; sports violence; cultural and religious negative factors; lack of a sports insurance policy; nepotistic and sentimental selection of sports; discrimination against the disabled in sports; and lack of comprehensive sports policy with constitutional backing.

Bogopa (2001) argues also that sexism is another thorny problem in sports development. Regrettably, this is traced to cultural and religious bearings. Women sports in Nigeria are granted second-fiddle status to those of the men. Also, neo-colonial tendencies have tended to worsen sports in Nigeria. Another case is the reduced value attached to the few national sports edifices – the National Stadia at Abuja and Lagos. These stadia are no longer highly esteemed because they tend to be opened to every event – sports, religious, show business, trade fair, etc. The issues in health also are of importance. Drug consumption and delinquency, tobacco and alcohol all constitute a poor state.

Tourism on the other hand is also a key factor to development. But in Nigeria, there is no data bank on it; a dearth of entrepreneurial expertise; no comprehensive national policy on tourism (Aziza, 1998); comprehensive impact assessment to guard against environmental and possible health hazards (Okereke, 1995); and more poignantly, there has not been concerted efforts at collaborating with other industries to enhance development. Unstable political setting is also a factor (Moneke, 2004).

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it could be posited that every society craves for development. In pursuit for this, economic growth and development are argued as being very necessary for development to occur. To this end, economies, the world over, have over the years invested on tourism to enhance the realization of the dream for development. But lately, the sports industry has been deemed capable of up-surfing the drive to tourism improvement and general development. Here lies the drift which grants ennoblement to the assertion that “sport and tourism mutually enhance societal development”.

This paper however observes that owing to the problems of overbearing government interest, sports violence, disability discrimination, negative cultural and religious factors, sectional tendencies, lack of compressive national policy and poor database and other shortcomings bedeviling the sports and tourism industries, the potentials of these industries may perish. In which case the promises these industries hold in the march to development may not come to fruition.

All in all, it could be deduced that the two industries (Tourism and Sports) are capable to do more. Since there is room for improvement therefore, the following suggestions are proffered as recommendations:

- There is need for greater private sector participation while government merely sets the enabling environment with the training of administrative and technical personnel encouraged as a top priority;
- Having regards to the multiplier effects of hosting major sports meets, government should raise her political will in bidding to host global competitions and the improvements of infrastructure will naturally follow– a pointer to societal development;
- All cultures and religions should be persuaded to promote sports and tourism. Thus, every factor against women liberation should be vilified in its totality. This is more apt in this era of gender equalization;
- Investment in disabled sports;
- There is need to foist the acceptance of our indigenous elements – human and non-human (e.g coaches and our local materials). With this we can showcase what we have to the outside world. It would induce a reverse of neo-colonialism;
- Greater persuasion on Nigerians should be directed at a better inclination to maintenance culture;
- Sports and tourism edifices should be granted greater value (the national stadia should not be reduced to an all and sundry affair). Let the games played there be of very high magnitude and standard; and health facilities should be made available for sportsman/woman and tourists who pick ill.
- Data banks should also be considered as necessary, and the political climate also needs to be stable and conducive for sports and tourism events and facilities; and
- Greater collaboration of these two institutions and many others should be fostered; much as sports violence, communal clashes, incessant labour mass protests, should be policed.

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