



ALKEBULAN

**A Journal of West and
East African Studies**

Volume 5, Issue 2

Alkebulan: A Journal of West and East African Studies

<https://gnosipress.com.ng/index.php/alkebulan>

ISSN (Online): 2971-6187

The Effect of Sports Sponsorships in Enhancing Economic Development: A Case Study of Bayelsa and Delta States, Nigeria

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Received: 20 May 2024

Accepted: 20 May 2025

Published: 20 May 2025

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ABSTRACT

The research explores how sports sponsorship programs contribute to job creation, infrastructure development, and the stimulation of local businesses. It also identifies the challenges faced by public and private stakeholders in leveraging sports sponsorships for sustainable economic growth. The research design used for this study was the descriptive research. The findings indicate that sports sponsorships significantly contribute to regional economic development by creating employment opportunities, improving sports infrastructure, and boosting local businesses, particularly in hospitality, tourism, and retail sectors. Additionally, private investments and partnerships driven by sports sponsorships play a pivotal role in fostering economic growth. However, challenges such as financial constraints, political instability, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural factors hinder the full potential of these sponsorships. The analysis of two hypotheses revealed significant positive correlations between the level of sports sponsorship investment and the creation of employment opportunities, as well as between sports sponsorships and the development of sports tourism, which in turn stimulates local businesses and contributes to overall economic growth. Based on these findings, the study recommends strengthening government and private sector collaboration, improving sports infrastructure, developing long-term sports tourism strategies, and addressing socio-cultural barriers to enhance public engagement with sports. These recommendations aim to maximize the economic benefits of sports sponsorships and ensure sustainable economic development in Bayelsa and Delta States, ultimately contributing to the broader regional economy.

Keywords: Sports Sponsorships; Economic Development; Job Creation; Bayelsa; Delta States; Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Sports sponsorship is increasingly recognized as a powerful driver of economic development, particularly in emerging markets where investment in sports infrastructure and the tourism sector is seen as a path to sustainable growth. In Nigeria, states such as Bayelsa and Delta have begun to realize the potential of sports sponsorships as a catalyst for economic development, job creation, infrastructure improvement, and stimulation of local businesses. These states, both located in the Niger Delta region, possess unique socio-economic and cultural landscapes that could greatly benefit from well-executed sports sponsorship initiatives. In Bayelsa and Delta States, the strategic investment in sports through sponsorship has had far-reaching effects on economic growth and social transformation. These states leveraged sports sponsorships to catalyze infrastructural development, stimulate local businesses, create employment opportunities, and enhance community cohesion. However, despite the increasing investment in sports sponsorship, challenges such as political instability, inadequate infrastructure, and limited public-private collaboration remain obstacles to maximizing their economic impact.

Sports sponsorship can generate substantial financial benefits through increased tourism, employment, and business opportunities. In regions like Bayelsa and Delta States, sports events and activities can attract domestic and international tourists, which, in turn, boosts sectors such as hospitality, transportation, retail, and entertainment (Glynn & McDonald, 2020). Furthermore, the promotion of sports can also lead to improvements in local infrastructure, as the development of stadiums, training facilities, and transportation networks becomes a priority for state governments and private investors (Bucher, 2021). However, the full potential of sports sponsorships in Bayelsa and Delta States remains underexplored. A recent study by Lee and Shank (2020) highlighted the complex relationships between sports sponsorship investments and regional economic growth, suggesting that a lack of sustained financial commitment and political stability can limit the benefits that could otherwise be derived from sports sponsorships. Thus, understanding how these sponsorships influence job creation, infrastructure development, and local business stimulation in these specific regions is crucial for maximizing their impact.

In Delta State, sports sponsorship has been a cornerstone of its economic strategy, with significant government and private sector investments. The Delta State government, under initiatives like the annual Delta State Sports Festival and the sponsorship of professional sports teams, has positioned sports as an engine for economic growth. For instance, a study by Udechukwu and Ekechukwu (2019) highlights that sports sponsorship in Delta State attracted private sector funding that boosted local economies through increased consumer spending, particularly during major sporting events. The economic benefits extend beyond direct investments in sports to include job creation in sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and event management.

Similarly, Bayelsa State has utilized sports sponsorship to drive economic development. The administration of Governor Douye Diri, in particular, has prioritized sports as a medium for youth empowerment and economic revitalization. High-profile events such as the Douye Diri National Wrestling Classics and the Bayelsa Governor's Football Cup have drawn national attention, showcasing the state's potential as a hub for sports tourism. According to Amadi and Johnson (2021), such events have significantly increased the demand for local goods and services, particularly in the hospitality and

retail sectors. These sponsorships also create opportunities for local athletes to compete on larger platforms, fostering talent development and reducing youth unemployment.

Furthermore, the ripple effects of sports sponsorships are evident in the infrastructural investments in these states. Delta State's hosting of the National Sports Festival in 2022 is a prime example. The event necessitated upgrades to sporting facilities, including the Stephen Keshi Stadium, which continues to attract local and international events, further boosting economic activities in the region. Similarly, Bayelsa State has invested in the development of multi-purpose sports facilities, creating a conducive environment for both grassroots and professional sports to thrive.

The role of corporate sponsorships cannot be overlooked. Companies like Zenith Bank, Globacom, and the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) Limited have actively supported sporting events in these states. These sponsorships have enhanced brand visibility while contributing to regional development. Okoro and Akinpelu (2023) note that corporate sponsorships in sports create a symbiotic relationship where companies benefit from brand loyalty, and communities experience improved economic conditions through the influx of resources. Bayelsa and Delta States harness the potential of sports sponsorship to drive economic growth. Through a combination of government initiatives, private sector partnerships, and community engagement, these states have set a benchmark for leveraging sports as a catalyst for development. This narrative underscores the transformative power of sports sponsorship in addressing economic challenges and fostering sustainable growth in the Niger Delta region.

This research seeks to address this gap by investigating the effect of sports sponsorships on the economic development of Bayelsa and Delta States, focusing on job creation, infrastructure development, and local business stimulation. The study also identifies the challenges and limitations faced by both public and private stakeholders in leveraging sports sponsorships to achieve sustainable economic growth. By examining these factors, the research aims to provide recommendations for optimizing the role of sports sponsorships in fostering economic development in these regions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the relationship between sports sponsorship and economic development has garnered significant attention from scholars. Sports sponsorship, defined as a financial or in-kind investment in sports in exchange for promotional opportunities, can lead to various economic benefits, including increased tourism, job creation, and business growth (Parganas et al., 2020). Sponsorship funds often facilitate the development of sports infrastructure, enabling regions to host large-scale sports events that attract both local and international tourists. This phenomenon is particularly evident in countries such as Brazil, South Africa, and Russia, where international sporting events have been linked to significant economic gains (Tassiopoulos & Kock, 2018).

In Nigeria, sports sponsorships have gained traction in recent years, with both public and private sectors recognizing the potential of sports as an economic driver. Bayelsa and Delta States, however, still face numerous challenges, including political instability, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural barriers, that hinder the full realization of the benefits of sports sponsorships (Jiang & Lee, 2019). These challenges necessitate a closer examination of the specific obstacles faced by stakeholders in these regions.

Sports sponsorships can directly create jobs in various sectors. Event management, hospitality, security, transportation, and media all experience increased demand during

major sporting events. Furthermore, sponsorships can foster the development of crucial skills within local communities. For instance, initiatives focused on grassroots sports development can provide training opportunities for coaches, referees, and sports administrators, equipping them with valuable skills applicable beyond the sports arena (Akarah, 2021).

The influx of funds from sports sponsorships can be leveraged to improve sporting infrastructure. This includes the construction and renovation of stadiums, training facilities, and sports centers. These investments not only benefit athletes and sporting organizations but also contribute to the overall development of the region. Improved infrastructure can attract tourists, sports enthusiasts, and investors, further stimulating economic activity (Nwabuwe & Akarah, 2025). Major sporting events, particularly those attracting international participation, can significantly boost tourism. Sponsorships play a crucial role in making these events possible, thus indirectly contributing to the growth of the tourism sector. Increased tourist arrivals translate to higher demand for accommodation, transportation, dining, and entertainment services, benefiting local businesses and creating employment opportunities (Ojeme, 2000).

Sports sponsorships can have a profound social impact by promoting community cohesion, fostering healthy lifestyles, and reducing social issues like youth delinquency. By investing in youth sports programs, sponsors can contribute to the development of young talent, providing them with opportunities for personal growth and social mobility. These positive social outcomes can indirectly contribute to economic development by creating a more stable and productive society (Okon & Noah, 2004). Successful sporting events enhance the image and reputation of the host region. Positive media coverage and the influx of visitors can attract the attention of investors and businesses, leading to increased investment in the region. Sponsorships can play a vital role in showcasing the potential of Bayelsa and Delta States to a wider audience, making them more attractive destinations for investment and economic growth (Umotong, 2008).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To assess how sports sponsorships have contributed to job creation, infrastructure development, and local business stimulation in Bayelsa and Delta States.
2. To examine the challenges and limitations faced by public and private stakeholders in leveraging sports sponsorships for sustainable economic development in these regions.
3. To evaluate the impact of sports sponsorships on the development of sports tourism and its potential for generating increased revenue for local businesses.
4. To offer recommendations for optimizing sports sponsorship initiatives to enhance their contribution to economic growth in Bayelsa and Delta States.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How have sports sponsorships contributed to economic growth and development in Bayelsa and Delta States, particularly in terms of job creation, infrastructure development, and local business stimulation?
2. What are the challenges and limitations faced by public and private stakeholders in leveraging sports sponsorships to achieve sustainable economic development in Bayelsa and Delta States?

HYPOTHESES

H 1: There is a significant positive correlation between the level of sports sponsorship investment and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities in Bayelsa and Delta States.

H 2: Sports sponsorships in Bayelsa and Delta States significantly contribute to the development of sports tourism, leading to increased revenue generation for local businesses and a positive impact on the overall economic growth of these states.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant as it provides insights into the role of sports sponsorships in driving economic development in Bayelsa and Delta States. The findings will contribute to the body of knowledge on sports economics, particularly within the Nigerian context, and will offer practical recommendations for policymakers, sports organizations, and businesses seeking to maximize the economic impact of sports sponsorships. Furthermore, the study will serve as a valuable resource for future research on sports sponsorships and their potential in other emerging markets.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used for this study was the descriptive research. The population for the study was 120 respondents consists of all the Sports marketers, Sports coaches, Sports journalists, and Sportsmen/women in Bayelsa and Delta States, Nigeria. The questionnaire retived was used for the study and analyzes. The sample for the study consists of one hundred (100) randomly selected Sports marketers, Sports coaches, Sports journalists, and Sportsmen/women with ten (10) participants per unit/sectors in Bayelsa and Delta States. The simple random sampling technique was utilized for the study.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Research Question 1: How have sports sponsorships contributed to economic growth and development in Bayelsa and Delta States, particularly in terms of job creation, infrastructure development, and local business stimulation?

S/N	STATEMENT	N	MEAN	SD	DECISION
1.	What specific sports sponsorship programs have been implemented in Bayelsa and Delta States, and how have these programs directly impacted job creation in local communities?	100	2.53	.36440	Accepted
2.	In what ways has the influx of sports sponsorship funding contributed to the development of sports-related infrastructure, such as stadiums, training facilities, and transportation networks, in Bayelsa and Delta States?	100	2.67	.78210	Accepted
3.	How has sports sponsorship in Bayelsa and Delta States influenced the growth and sustainability of local businesses,	100	2.77	3.2454	Accepted

	particularly those in hospitality, tourism, and retail sectors?				
4.	To what extent have sports sponsorships in Bayelsa and Delta States contributed to the attraction of private investments and partnerships, and what role has this played in the overall economic development of the regions?	100	2.89	.8983	Accepted
5.	What are the long-term economic impacts of sports sponsorships on the regional economy of Bayelsa and Delta States, and how can these initiatives be optimized for greater job creation and community development?	100	2.53	1.20605	Accepted

Table 1 above provides insights into the contributions of sports sponsorships to economic development in Bayelsa and Delta States, focusing on job creation, infrastructure development, and the stimulation of local businesses. The data set includes five key statements, and for each statement, the mean score (average response) and standard deviation (SD) are provided. The decision column indicates whether the statement was accepted based on the response scale. Job Creation Impact of Sports Sponsorships, Statement: What specific sports sponsorship programs have been implemented in Bayelsa and Delta States, and how have these programs directly impacted job creation in local communities? Mean: 2.53, Standard Deviation (SD): 0.36440, Decision: Accepted. Analysis: A mean score of 2.53 suggests that participants generally agree that sports sponsorships have contributed to job creation, but the response is closer to neutral. The relatively low standard deviation (0.36440) indicates that there is some consensus among respondents on this point.

Although the agreement is modest, the impact of sports sponsorship on job creation is perceived as positive but not overwhelming. Infrastructure Development Due to Sports Sponsorship: Statement: In what ways has the influx of sports sponsorship funding contributed to the development of sports-related infrastructure, such as stadiums, training facilities, and transportation networks, in Bayelsa and Delta States? Mean: 2.67, Standard Deviation (SD): 0.78210, Decision: Accepted. Analysis: With a mean score of 2.67, respondents appear to agree that sports sponsorships have played a role in developing sports-related infrastructure. The standard deviation of 0.78210 suggests a higher level of variation in responses, indicating some respondents may have had differing opinions on the extent of the impact. Overall, the data supports the idea that sports sponsorship has contributed to infrastructure development, although the impact may not be uniform across all regions. Influence of Sports Sponsorship on Local Business Growth: Statement: How has sports sponsorship in Bayelsa and Delta States influenced the growth and sustainability of local businesses, particularly those in hospitality, tourism, and retail sectors? Mean: 2.77, Standard Deviation (SD): 3.2454, Decision: Accepted. Analysis: The mean score of 2.77 shows stronger agreement with the statement that sports sponsorship has positively influenced local business growth. However, the very high standard deviation (3.2454) raises a concern about the significant variability in responses, suggesting that there are diverse views on the degree of impact. Some

respondents may perceive sports sponsorship as a major economic driver for local businesses, while others may see it as having a less substantial effect.

Attraction of Private Investments through Sports Sponsorship: Statement: To what extent have sports sponsorships in Bayelsa and Delta States contributed to the attraction of private investments and partnerships, and what role has this played in the overall economic development of the regions? Mean: 2.89, Standard Deviation (SD): 0.8983, Decision: Accepted. Analysis: A mean score of 2.89 indicates relatively strong agreement that sports sponsorships have attracted private investments and partnerships, playing a significant role in economic development. The standard deviation (0.8983) suggests moderate variation in responses, implying that while most respondents agree with the positive impact of sports sponsorship on private investments, some may perceive the contribution as more limited.

Long-Term Economic Impacts of Sports Sponsorship: Statement: What are the long-term economic impacts of sports sponsorships on the regional economy of Bayelsa and Delta States, and how can these initiatives be optimized for greater job creation and community development? Mean: 2.53, Standard Deviation (SD): 1.20605, Decision: Accepted. Analysis: The mean score of 2.53 suggests a moderate agreement that sports sponsorships have long-term economic impacts on the regional economy. The relatively high standard deviation (1.20605) indicates considerable variation in responses, which may reflect differing opinions about the sustainability of sports sponsorship initiatives and their long-term effects. Despite this, the general perception remains positive, with a focus on optimizing these initiatives for greater community benefits.

The data suggests that sports sponsorships in Bayelsa and Delta States have contributed positively to economic development, with notable effects in areas such as job creation, infrastructure development, and local business stimulation. However, the variability in responses, especially with high standard deviations in some areas, points to differing views on the extent of these contributions. Key areas where respondents felt sports sponsorship has had an impact include job creation (2.53 mean), infrastructure development (2.67 mean), and the attraction of private investments (2.89 mean). The challenges associated with long-term sustainability and diverse local impacts warrant further exploration to fully understand how sports sponsorship can be optimized for lasting economic benefits.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges and limitations faced by public and private stakeholders in leveraging sports sponsorships to achieve sustainable economic development in Bayelsa and Delta States?

S/N	STATEMENT	N	MEAN	SD	DECISION
6.	What are the key financial constraints faced by both public and private stakeholders in Bayelsa and Delta States that limit their ability to invest in long-term sports sponsorships for economic development?	100	2.87	.45546	Accepted

7.	How does political instability and poor governance in Bayelsa and Delta States affect the strategic planning and execution of sports sponsorships aimed at fostering economic growth?	100	3.10	.36423	Accepted
8.	In what ways do inadequate sports infrastructure and limited capacity to host large-scale events hinder the potential of sports sponsorships to stimulate local economies in Bayelsa and Delta States?	100	2.71	.63942	Accepted
9.	How do socio-cultural factors, including public perception and engagement with sports, impact the success of sports sponsorship initiatives in contributing to sustainable economic development in these regions?	100	3.54	.84351	Accepted
10.	What are the challenges related to measuring the tangible economic impacts of sports sponsorships, and how can public and private stakeholders improve their monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure sustainable outcomes for Bayelsa and Delta States?	100	2.55	3.2524	Accepted

Table 2 above provides insights into the challenges and limitations that both public and private stakeholders face when leveraging sports sponsorships for sustainable economic development in Bayelsa and Delta States. Each statement is analyzed with respect to the mean score (average response) and standard deviation (SD), along with the decision to accept or reject the statement based on the responses. Key Financial Constraints: Statement: What are the key financial constraints faced by both public and private stakeholders in Bayelsa and Delta States that limit their ability to invest in long-term sports sponsorships for economic development? Mean: 2.87, Standard Deviation (SD): 0.45546, Decision: Accepted. Analysis: A mean score of 2.87 indicates that respondents generally agree that financial constraints are a significant challenge to investing in long-term sports sponsorships.

The standard deviation of 0.45546 is relatively low, suggesting that most respondents have a similar view on this issue. The data implies that limited financial resources are a barrier to the growth of sports sponsorships and their potential for economic development. Political Instability and Poor Governance: Statement: How does political instability and poor governance in Bayelsa and Delta States affect the strategic planning and execution of sports sponsorships aimed at fostering economic growth? Mean: 3.10, Standard Deviation (SD): 0.36423, Decision: Accepted. Analysis: The mean score of 3.10 suggests strong agreement that political instability and poor governance significantly affect the planning and execution of sports sponsorships. The low standard deviation (0.36423) indicates a high level of consensus among respondents. Political and

governance issues are seen as critical barriers to the effective implementation of sports sponsorship initiatives aimed at driving economic growth in these states. Inadequate Sports Infrastructure and Event Hosting Capacity: Statement: In what ways do inadequate sports infrastructure and limited capacity to host large-scale events hinder the potential of sports sponsorships to stimulate local economies in Bayelsa and Delta States? Mean: 2.71, Standard Deviation (SD): 0.63942, Decision: Accepted. Analysis: A mean score of 2.71 indicates moderate agreement that inadequate sports infrastructure and limited event hosting capacity are significant challenges. The standard deviation of 0.63942 suggests some variation in responses, indicating that while many agree on the issue, a portion of respondents may not see infrastructure as a major barrier. Nonetheless, the data shows that infrastructure limitations hinder the full potential of sports sponsorships in stimulating economic growth.

Impact of Socio-Cultural Factors: Statement: How do socio-cultural factors, including public perception and engagement with sports, impact the success of sports sponsorship initiatives in contributing to sustainable economic development in these regions? Mean: 3.54, Standard Deviation (SD): 0.84351, Decision: Accepted. Analysis: The mean score of 3.54 shows strong agreement that socio-cultural factors—such as public perception and engagement with sports—play a significant role in the success of sports sponsorships. The standard deviation of 0.84351 indicates a moderate level of variation in responses, suggesting that while many respondents see socio-cultural factors as key, others may view them as less critical. However, the overall consensus is that these factors are crucial for the long-term success of sports sponsorship initiatives. Challenges in Measuring Economic Impact: Statement: What are the challenges related to measuring the tangible economic impacts of sports sponsorships, and how can public and private stakeholders improve their monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure sustainable outcomes for Bayelsa and Delta States? Mean: 2.55, Standard Deviation (SD): 3.2524, Decision: Accepted. Analysis: A mean score of 2.55 indicates moderate agreement that challenges in measuring the economic impacts of sports sponsorships exist. However, the very high standard deviation of 3.2524 suggests considerable variability in responses, implying that there are widely differing opinions on the extent of these challenges. Some respondents may find it difficult to quantify the economic effects of sports sponsorships, while others may have more confidence in existing measurement tools. This indicates a need for improved monitoring and evaluation practices to ensure sustainable outcomes.

The data reveals several challenges and limitations faced by public and private stakeholders in leveraging sports sponsorships for sustainable economic development in Bayelsa and Delta States: Respondents agree that financial limitations hinder the ability to invest in long-term sports sponsorships (Mean: 2.87). There is strong agreement that political instability and governance issues impact the strategic planning and execution of sponsorships (Mean: 3.10). The lack of adequate infrastructure and capacity to host large-scale events is seen as a moderate barrier to economic stimulation through sports (Mean: 2.71). Public perception and cultural engagement with sports play a significant role in the success of sponsorship initiatives (Mean: 3.54). There is moderate agreement that measuring the economic impact of sports sponsorships is challenging, with substantial variation in responses (Mean: 2.55).

The findings suggest that addressing financial, governance, infrastructure, and socio-cultural barriers, as well as improving monitoring and evaluation practices, could

enhance the effectiveness of sports sponsorships in driving sustainable economic development in these regions.

Hypothesis One:

	There is a significant positive correlation between the level of sports sponsorship investment and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities in Bayelsa and Delta States.
Chi – square	23.876
d.f	3
Assumption significance level	0.030

H 1: There is a significant positive correlation between the level of sports sponsorship investment and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities in Bayelsa and Delta States. The statistical test used to analyze this hypothesis is the Chi-Square Test. Below are the key statistical results provided: Chi-Square (χ^2) value: 23.876, Degrees of Freedom (d.f.): 3, Assumed Significance Level (p-value): 0.030, The Chi-Square test is used to assess whether there is a significant association between two categorical variables—in this case, the level of sports sponsorship investment and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities. The test evaluates the degree to which observed frequencies (or counts) deviate from expected frequencies. Chi-Square Value (23.876): The Chi-Square value quantifies the difference between the expected and observed frequencies. A higher value suggests a stronger association between the two variables. Degrees of Freedom (d.f.) = 3: Degrees of freedom in the Chi-Square test are calculated as the number of categories minus 1 (for each variable). In this case, the number of degrees of freedom is 3, which helps determine the critical value for comparing with the calculated Chi-Square value. Significance Level and Decision Rule: The significance level (also referred to as the p-value) is provided as 0.030. The significance level is a threshold for deciding whether the results are statistically significant. Assumed Significance Level (p-value = 0.030): A p-value of 0.030 is less than the common threshold of 0.05 (the typical level for statistical significance). This means the results are statistically significant at the 5% significance level. Decision: Given that the p-value is 0.030 (which is less than 0.05), we reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis in this context would be: "There is no significant relationship between the level of sports sponsorship investment and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities." By rejecting the null hypothesis, we accept the alternative hypothesis, which suggests that there is a significant positive correlation between the level of sports sponsorship investment and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities in Bayelsa and Delta States.

The Chi-Square test results indicate a significant association between the level of sports sponsorship investment and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities in Bayelsa and Delta States. The significant positive correlation suggests that as the level of investment in sports sponsorship increases, there is a corresponding increase in employment opportunities in the region. This finding highlights the potential for sports sponsorships to be a key driver of economic development through job creation in these

states. Based on the Chi-Square value (23.876), degrees of freedom (3), and the p-value (0.030), the hypothesis is supported. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that increased investment in sports sponsorships contributes significantly to the creation of sustainable employment opportunities in Bayelsa and Delta States.

Hypothesis Two:

	Sports sponsorships in Bayelsa and Delta States significantly contribute to the development of sports tourism, leading to increased revenue generation for local businesses and a positive impact on the overall economic growth of these states.
Chi – square	23.876a
Assumption significance level	0.000

H 2: Sports sponsorships in Bayelsa and Delta States significantly contribute to the development of sports tourism, leading to increased revenue generation for local businesses and a positive impact on the overall economic growth of these states. The statistical test used to analyze this hypothesis is the Chi-Square Test, with the following key results provided: Chi-Square (χ^2) value: 23.876, Assumed Significance Level (p-value): 0.000. The Chi-Square test is used to evaluate whether there is a significant association between two categorical variables—in this case, the role of sports sponsorships in developing sports tourism and its effect on local businesses and economic growth. Chi-Square Value (23.876): The Chi-Square value of 23.876 suggests a strong deviation from the expected frequencies, indicating a significant relationship between sports sponsorships and sports tourism development. Significance Level and Decision Rule: The significance level (also known as the p-value) is provided as 0.000, which is much lower than the typical significance threshold of 0.05. Assumed Significance Level (p-value = 0.000): A p-value of 0.000 is well below 0.05, indicating that the results are highly statistically significant. Decision: Given that the p-value is 0.000 (which is less than 0.05), we reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis in this case would be: "Sports sponsorships do not significantly contribute to the development of sports tourism, revenue generation for local businesses, or economic growth." Since the p-value is extremely small, we conclude that there is significant evidence to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, which asserts that sports sponsorships in Bayelsa and Delta States significantly contribute to sports tourism development, local business revenue generation, and overall economic growth. The Chi-Square test results indicate a statistically significant relationship between sports sponsorships and the development of sports tourism, which in turn positively impacts local businesses and overall economic growth in Bayelsa and Delta States. This suggests that sports sponsorship plays a crucial role in enhancing sports tourism, which generates revenue for local businesses and contributes to economic development in these regions. Based on the Chi-Square value of 23.876 and the very small p-value of 0.000, we conclude that there is strong evidence supporting the hypothesis. Sports sponsorships in Bayelsa and Delta States significantly contribute to the development of sports tourism, leading to increased

revenue for local businesses and contributing positively to the economic growth of the states.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of the first research question reveals that sports sponsorships have a notable positive impact on the economic growth and development of Bayelsa and Delta States, particularly in areas like job creation, infrastructure development, and the stimulation of local businesses. The findings show that sports sponsorships contribute directly to the creation of jobs in local communities (mean score = 2.53). This result is consistent with the idea that sports events and related activities create employment opportunities, both directly (e.g., in event management, security, and sports organizations) and indirectly (e.g., in hospitality, tourism, and retail). Sports sponsorship funding has played a role in developing sports-related infrastructure, such as stadiums and training facilities (mean score = 2.67). The improvement of infrastructure is critical for fostering long-term economic growth and attracting both national and international investments in these regions. There is strong evidence to suggest that sports sponsorships have stimulated local businesses, particularly those in the hospitality, tourism, and retail sectors (mean score = 2.77). These industries benefit from increased demand for services and products associated with sports events. The influx of sponsorships also attracts private investments and partnerships, which have contributed to the overall economic development of Bayelsa and Delta States (mean score = 2.89). The presence of sports sponsorships creates a favorable environment for both local and international investors. These findings align with the broader literature on sports sponsorship, which suggests that it can be a catalyst for regional economic development by creating jobs, improving infrastructure, and stimulating local businesses. For example, a study by Lee and Shank (2020) highlights that sports sponsorships play a vital role in enhancing the economic impact of sports tourism by increasing the demand for services from various sectors such as transportation and hospitality.

The analysis of the second research question reveals several significant challenges that public and private stakeholders face in leveraging sports sponsorships for sustainable economic development: A key limitation identified is the lack of sufficient financial resources to invest in long-term sports sponsorships (mean score = 2.87). This aligns with broader research that highlights the importance of financial commitment from both public and private sectors for sports sponsorships to be successful in driving economic growth (Bucher, 2021). The political climate and governance challenges in these states also affect the successful execution of sports sponsorship programs (mean score = 3.10). This finding is supported by studies on the impact of political instability on economic development, where political uncertainty undermines long-term investments (Jiang & Lee, 2019). Limited infrastructure and the inability to host large-scale events restrict the potential of sports sponsorships to stimulate the local economy (mean score = 2.71). Without proper venues and support systems, such as hotels, transportation networks, and other facilities, it becomes challenging to host events that can generate substantial economic returns. The public perception of sports and engagement with sports-related activities is also a significant factor in determining the success of sponsorship programs (mean score = 3.54). Socio-cultural dynamics, such as local interest in sports and support for sponsored events, can either enhance or hinder the impact of sports sponsorship on local economies.

These findings emphasize the complex, multifaceted nature of implementing successful sports sponsorship programs. As highlighted in previous studies by Hall (2019), the socio-political environment and infrastructure availability are key factors that affect the outcomes of sports sponsorships.

The Chi-Square test for **Hypothesis One** reveals a statistically significant positive correlation between the level of sports sponsorship investment and job creation ($\chi^2 = 23.876$, p-value = 0.030). This confirms that increased investment in sports sponsorship leads to more employment opportunities, validating the relationship between sponsorship investment and job creation in these regions. The finding aligns with the results from **Research Question 1**, which indicated that sports sponsorships contribute directly to job creation. This positive correlation is supported by the work of Parganas et al. (2020), who found that increased sponsorship funding leads to more sustainable employment in both direct and ancillary sectors tied to sports events, such as hospitality and retail.

For **Hypothesis Two**, the Chi-Square test results ($\chi^2 = 23.876$, p-value = 0.000) provide strong evidence that sports sponsorships contribute significantly to the development of sports tourism, which in turn leads to increased revenue generation for local businesses and overall economic growth. The findings are consistent with

Research Question 1, where sports sponsorships were found to stimulate local businesses, especially in the hospitality and tourism sectors. The positive impact of sports tourism on local economies is well-documented. According to a study by McCartney and Keown (2021), sports tourism can be a major driver of economic growth by attracting visitors who spend on accommodation, transport, food, and entertainment, benefiting local businesses and generating revenue for the state.

The findings from both research questions and hypotheses support the notion that sports sponsorships have a significant positive impact on economic development in Bayelsa and Delta States. They contribute to job creation, infrastructure development, and the stimulation of local businesses, particularly in the tourism and hospitality sectors. However, challenges such as financial constraints, political instability, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural factors limit the full potential of sports sponsorships. The hypotheses further reinforce these conclusions, with significant positive correlations found between sports sponsorship investment and employment creation, as well as between sports sponsorships and sports tourism development. These findings suggest that policymakers should focus on creating a conducive environment for investment in sports, improving infrastructure, and addressing socio-political challenges to fully harness the economic benefits of sports sponsorships. Additionally, stakeholders can explore further collaborations between public and private sectors to address financial constraints and boost the overall impact of sports sponsorship on regional economic growth.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of sports sponsorships on enhancing economic development in Bayelsa and Delta States, Nigeria. By analyzing various facets of sports sponsorships, including their impact on job creation, infrastructure development, local business stimulation, and overall economic growth, the research provided valuable

insights into the ways in which sports can drive regional development. The findings from this study indicate that sports sponsorships play a crucial role in the economic growth of Bayelsa and Delta States. Specifically, the sponsorship programs have contributed significantly to job creation, with sports-related activities providing direct and indirect employment opportunities in the region. The development of sports infrastructure, such as stadiums and training facilities, has also been a notable outcome, providing the physical foundation for sustainable sports activities. Furthermore, local businesses, particularly those in the hospitality, tourism, and retail sectors, have benefited from increased demand tied to sports events and sponsorship-driven activities. The influx of sports sponsorship funding has fostered private investments and partnerships, thus playing a pivotal role in regional economic development.

Despite the positive impacts, the study revealed several challenges that hinder the full potential of sports sponsorships. These include financial constraints, which limit the ability to invest in long-term sponsorships; political instability and governance issues that disrupt strategic planning; inadequate infrastructure that prevents hosting large-scale events; and socio-cultural factors that influence public perception and engagement with sports. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from both public and private stakeholders to create a more favorable environment for sports sponsorships to thrive and achieve sustainable economic outcomes.

The Chi-Square test for Hypothesis One ($\chi^2 = 23.876$, p-value = 0.030) provided statistical evidence supporting the hypothesis, confirming a significant positive correlation between sports sponsorship investment and the creation of employment opportunities. The data suggests that as investment in sports sponsorships increases, the creation of sustainable jobs follows, particularly in industries such as event management, hospitality, and tourism. The Chi-Square test for Hypothesis Two ($\chi^2 = 23.876$, p-value = 0.000) also confirmed the hypothesis, showing that sports sponsorships significantly contribute to the development of sports tourism. This, in turn, generates increased revenue for local businesses and stimulates overall economic growth in the states. The positive impact on local businesses, especially in the tourism and hospitality sectors, underscores the importance of sports sponsorships in fostering a thriving local economy.

In summary, sports sponsorships in Bayelsa and Delta States have proven to be a powerful tool for driving economic development. The creation of jobs, development of sports infrastructure, stimulation of local businesses, and attraction of private investments are key indicators of the positive impact of sports sponsorships on the regional economy. However, challenges such as financial limitations, political instability, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural factors must be addressed to maximize the potential of sports sponsorships. Future efforts should focus on improving governance, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering a culture of sports engagement to further leverage the economic benefits of sports sponsorships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To fully capitalize on the economic benefits of sports sponsorships, it is essential for both government and private sector stakeholders to strengthen their collaboration. The government should create favorable policies and provide incentives for private sector involvement in sports sponsorships. These incentives could include tax breaks, infrastructure support, and facilitating easier access to sponsorship opportunities. By

working together, both sectors can pool resources and expertise to overcome financial constraints and ensure the sustainability of sports sponsorship programs.

2. The development and improvement of sports infrastructure are crucial for hosting large-scale sporting events that can attract tourism and increase local business activity. Investments should be made in building and upgrading stadiums, training facilities, transportation networks, and accommodation infrastructure. This would not only support the staging of high-profile events but also ensure that the regions remain attractive for future sports sponsorships and events. Additionally, public-private partnerships could be explored to reduce the financial burden on the government while boosting infrastructure quality.

3. Bayelsa and Delta States should develop comprehensive sports tourism strategies that highlight the economic potential of sporting events and related activities. This could include promoting the regions as key sports tourism destinations, organizing annual events that attract both local and international tourists, and investing in marketing campaigns that raise the visibility of the states as sports hubs. A focused sports tourism strategy would generate sustained revenue for local businesses, particularly in hospitality, retail, and transportation sectors, while fostering long-term economic growth.

4. For sports sponsorships to have a lasting impact on economic development, it is essential to enhance public engagement and perception of sports. This can be achieved through community-based programs that encourage local participation in sports and educate the public about the potential economic benefits of sports events. Additionally, sports organizations and sponsors should consider local cultural dynamics and tailor sponsorship programs to ensure they resonate with the community. Public awareness campaigns, partnerships with local organizations, and grassroots initiatives can help build a strong sports culture that boosts both participation and the success of sponsorship initiatives.

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