

INFLUENCE OF MARKETING STRATEGIES ON SPORTS TOURISM ATTRACTIONS AMONG RESIDENTS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS.

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of marketing strategies on sports tourism attraction among residents in Ilorin Metropolis, Nigeria, focusing on event-driven promotional strategies, general marketing activities, and digital marketing tactics. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, with a sample of 200 respondents drawn from staff of the Kwara State Sports Commission, regular recreational users of Kwara Stadium, and sports goods business owners using multistage and stratified random sampling. Data were collected through a structured four-point Likert-scale questionnaire validated by three experts, yielding a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.78, and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression at a 0.05 significance level. Results showed high mean scores for all marketing variables (event-driven promotion = 3.68, marketing activities = 3.54, digital marketing tactics = 3.72) and sports tourism attraction (3.63), indicating strong resident interest. Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships among all variables, with digital marketing tactics showing the strongest correlation ($r = 0.67$). The regression model demonstrated that the three marketing strategies jointly explained 46% of the variance in sports tourism attraction ($R = 0.68$, $R^2 = 0.46$, $F = 54.32$, $p < 0.001$), and each predictor had a significant positive effect, with event-driven promotion ($\beta = 0.41$) emerging as the strongest. The study concludes that there are significant relationships, joint influence, and combined influence of event-driven promotional strategies, marketing activities, and digital marketing tactics on sports tourism attraction among residents in Ilorin Metropolis, and recommends that stakeholders in the city integrate and strengthen these marketing strategies to enhance participation, destination branding, and the socio-economic benefits of sports tourism.

Keywords: Marketing strategies, sports tourism, event-driven promotion, digital marketing, resident attraction

Introduction

The global tourism industry has undergone a substantial transformation over the past two decades, with sports tourism emerging as one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism economy. Sports tourism involves travel motivated by participation in, or observation of, sporting activities and events. It has increasingly become an important mechanism for economic growth, destination branding, and socio-cultural exchange. Globally, the travel and tourism sector contributes significantly to economic development, accounting for approximately 10% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supporting over 357 million jobs worldwide, representing nearly one in every ten jobs globally (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2025). Within this broader tourism economy, sports tourism has gained prominence as a strategic tool for destinations seeking to diversify their tourism offerings and generate sustainable revenue streams.

Sports tourism encompasses a broad range of activities, including mega sporting events, regional competitions, recreational sports travel, and community-based sporting festivals (Raso & Cherubini, 2023). These events attract both spectators and participants who contribute to local economies through expenditures on transportation, accommodation, food services, and entertainment. Beyond economic benefits, sports tourism also promotes community cohesion, cultural interaction, and active lifestyles, making it a valuable component of sustainable tourism development (Majeed, Aadil & Mir, 2025).

In the Nigerian context, tourism and recreational activities represent a sector with considerable yet underutilised economic potential. Recent economic assessments indicate that travel and tourism contributed approximately 3.6% of Nigeria's GDP in 2022, equivalent to about US\$17.3 billion in economic value (Statista). Furthermore, projections by the World Travel and Tourism Council estimate that the sector could contribute approximately ₦9.55 trillion (around US\$14.8 billion) to Nigeria's GDP in 2024, representing about 3.9% of national economic output. The sector also plays an important role in

employment generation, supporting approximately 2.71 million jobs across the country (WTTC, 2022; Olapade, 2022).

Domestic tourism constitutes a significant component of tourism activity in Nigeria. Estimates indicate that domestic tourism spending reached approximately ₦4.95 trillion, considerably higher than international visitor spending of about ₦491.9 billion, highlighting the critical role of residents in sustaining tourism activities (Osinubi, 2024). These statistics suggest that resident participation and perception are fundamental to the success of tourism initiatives, including sports tourism development. Nigeria's strong sporting culture further strengthens the potential for sports tourism growth. Football remains the most widely followed sport, attracting millions of spectators during national and domestic competitions. In addition, athletics, basketball, combat sports, and marathon races continue to gain increasing public interest. Events such as national athletics championships, city marathons, and professional football league matches provide opportunities for both domestic and international travel related to sports participation and spectatorship (Dukeh, 2025; Elendu, 2013).

Despite this potential, sports tourism in Nigeria remains relatively underdeveloped compared with global standards. Hede (2005) reported that one of the critical factors influencing its growth is the effectiveness of marketing strategies used to promote sporting events and tourism attractions. Marketing strategies, including promotional campaigns, destination branding, sponsorship partnerships, and digital marketing initiatives, play a central role in attracting participants, engaging communities, and enhancing the visibility of sports tourism destinations. Digital marketing is essential for the promotion of sports-related activities in the Hail region, particularly within the framework of active sports tourism. By utilising online platforms, tourism companies can significantly enhance their visibility and engagement with prospective travellers (Mallick, 2023). As consumers increasingly rely on digital channels for travel planning, these companies must adopt effective digital marketing strategies that expand their audience reach and elevate the quality of their services. This strategic approach not only drives bookings but also

fosters brand loyalty among consumers. Social media platforms, including Instagram and Facebook, serve as critical tools for engaging potential travellers, allowing companies to highlight unique experiences and interact directly with their audience (Rai & Dahal, 2024).

The rapid advancement of digital technology has further transformed tourism marketing practices. Social media platforms, search engines, and online advertising networks provide powerful channels through which event organisers can reach wider audiences and promote sporting events (Raji, Olodo & Oke, 2024). Veseli et al. (2025) submitted that digital marketing enables tourism stakeholders to deliver targeted promotional messages, increase public awareness, and monitor campaign effectiveness in real time. Furthermore, community engagement and resident support are essential determinants of successful sports tourism initiatives. Residents often serve as hosts, volunteers, and ambassadors during sporting events, and their perceptions can influence the overall visitor experience and long-term sustainability of tourism activities. When residents perceive sports tourism as beneficial, particularly in terms of economic opportunities, infrastructure development, and community pride, they are more likely to support tourism initiatives (González-García et al., 2022).

Given the growing importance of tourism in Nigeria and the increasing popularity of sporting activities, examining the influence of marketing strategies on sports tourism attraction among residents is essential. Understanding how different marketing approaches shape residents' awareness, perceptions, and participation can provide valuable insights for policymakers, tourism planners, and sports administrators seeking to maximise the developmental benefits of sports tourism.

Statement of the Problem

Sports tourism has become an increasingly significant component of the global tourism industry, contributing substantially to economic growth, employment generation, and destination development. Worldwide, the travel and tourism sector accounts for approximately 10% of global Gross Domestic

Product (GDP), underscoring its major contribution to economic activity and international mobility (Independent Newspaper Nigeria). In many developed and emerging economies, sports tourism has been strategically utilised to attract visitors, stimulate local economies, and enhance destination visibility through sporting events and recreational activities.

In Nigeria, tourism and recreational activities have gradually been recognised as potential drivers of economic diversification and sustainable development. Recent economic assessments indicate that the travel and tourism sector contributed approximately 3.6% to Nigeria's GDP in 2022, representing about US\$17.3 billion in economic value (Statista). Projections further suggest that the sector could contribute about ₦9.55 trillion to the national economy and support approximately 2.71 million jobs by 2024, highlighting its growing relevance to national economic development (WTTC, 2022; Olapade, 2022)

Despite these promising indicators, the development of sports tourism in Nigeria remains relatively limited. Although the country possesses numerous sporting events, facilities, and talented athletes capable of attracting both domestic and international visitors, many sports-related events struggle to achieve high levels of attendance, public engagement, and tourism impact. This situation suggests that challenges exist in the promotion and marketing of sports tourism attractions.

One major constraint is the ineffectiveness of marketing strategies used to promote sporting events and tourism activities. Many event organisers continue to rely predominantly on traditional promotional methods such as print media and radio advertising, which may not adequately reach contemporary audiences, particularly younger populations who increasingly depend on digital platforms for information and entertainment. As a result, potential participants and spectators may remain unaware of upcoming sporting events, thereby limiting attendance and reducing the tourism potential of these activities.

Weak branding and inadequate destination positioning often reduce the attractiveness of sports tourism events. Effective branding is essential for shaping positive perceptions and generating emotional connections with both residents and visitors. However, many sporting events in Nigerian cities lack

coordinated marketing campaigns and consistent branding strategies capable of generating sustained community interest.

The limited adoption of digital marketing tools, including social media promotion, online advertising, and influencer engagement, further constrains the visibility of sports tourism events. Given Nigeria's strong sporting culture and the economic potential of tourism, there is a need to better understand how different marketing strategies influence residents' attraction to sports tourism events. Therefore, this study investigates the influence of marketing strategies on sports tourism attraction among residents in Ilorin Metropolis, focusing specifically on event-driven promotional strategies, general marketing activities, and digital marketing tactics.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to:

1. examine the relationships among the Event-driven promotional strategies, marketing activities and digital marketing tactics and sports tourism attraction among residents in Ilorin Metropolis
2. find out the joint influence of (Event-driven promotional strategies, marketing activities and digital marketing tactics) on sports tourism attraction among residents in Ilorin Metropolis.
3. investigate the combined influence of (Event-driven promotional strategies, marketing activities and digital marketing tactics) on sports tourism attraction among residents in Ilorin Metropolis.

Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between marketing strategies and sports tourism attraction among residents of Ilorin Metropolis. The target population comprised stakeholders actively involved in sports-related activities in Ilorin Metropolis. These included staff members of the Kwara State Sports Commission, residents who regularly participate in recreational activities at Kwara Stadium, and sports goods business owners operating within the city. These groups represent key actors within the local sports tourism ecosystem, including event organisers, consumers of

sports tourism experiences, and business operators who benefit from sport-related economic activities. A sample of 200 respondents was selected through a multistage sampling procedure. First, purposive sampling was used to identify stakeholder groups directly involved in sports tourism activities. Subsequently, stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation of each category. The final distribution consisted of 70 staff members of the Kwara State Sports Commission, 80 recreational participants at Kwara Stadium, and 50 sports goods business owners. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher.

The instrument comprised two sections: Section A, which captured respondents' demographic characteristics, and Section B, which measured perceptions of marketing strategies and sports tourism attraction using a four-point Likert scale. To ensure content and construct validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in Human Kinetics, Sports Management, and Tourism at the University of Ilorin. Their recommendations improved the clarity and conceptual alignment of the instrument. Reliability was assessed through a pilot study involving 20 respondents in Offa, Kwara State, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.78, which indicates acceptable internal consistency for social science research. Data collection followed, including informed consent and voluntary participation. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, and Multiple Regression Analysis, with hypotheses tested at a 0.05 significance level.

Results

Correlation Analysis of Study Variables

To examine the relationships among the study variables, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted.

Table 1: *Correlation Matrix of Marketing Strategies and Sports Tourism Attraction*

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Event-Driven Promotion	1			
2. Marketing Activities	0.52**	1		
3. Digital Marketing Tactics	0.49**	0.55**	1	
4. Sports Tourism Attraction	0.61**	0.55**	0.67**	1

p < 0.05

The correlation results presented in Table 3 reveal positive and statistically significant relationships among all study variables. Event-driven promotional strategies demonstrate a strong positive relationship with sports tourism attraction ($r = 0.61$), indicating that increased organisation and promotion of sporting events contribute significantly to residents' interest in sports tourism activities. Marketing activities also show a moderate positive relationship with sports tourism attraction ($r = 0.55$), suggesting that advertising campaigns and sponsorship programmes contribute to increasing public awareness and engagement with sports tourism. Digital marketing tactics exhibit the strongest relationship with sports tourism attraction ($r = 0.67$), highlighting the growing importance of online promotional channels in influencing tourism behaviour.

Hypothesis Testing Using Multiple Regression Analysis

Hypothesis One: There is no significant joint influence of Event-driven promotional strategies, marketing activities and digital marketing tactics on sports tourism attraction.

Table 2: *Regression Analysis Showing the Joint Influence of Event-Driven Promotion, Marketing Activities, and Digital Marketing on Sports Tourism Attraction*

Models	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate (SEE)	ANOVA			
					F	df1	df2	Sig.
Community Event-Driven Promotion Marketing Activities, Digital Marketing Tactics	0.68	0.46	0.44	0.40	54.32	3	251	.001*

p ≤ 0.05

The multiple regression analysis revealed a strong multiple correlation between the predictors Event-Driven Promotion, Marketing Activities, and Digital Marketing Tactics on sports tourism attraction, with an R value of 0.68. The R² value of 0.46 indicates that 46% of the variance in sustainable sports development is explained by the combined effect of these predictors. The adjusted R² of 0.44, which takes into account the number of predictors and the sample size, suggests that the model fits the data well. Additionally, the Standard Error of Estimate (SEE) of 0.40 indicates the average distance that the observed values deviate from the regression line. The ANOVA results, with an F-value of 54.32 and a significance level of $p < 0.001$, confirm that the regression model significantly predicts sports tourism attraction, demonstrating that the combined predictors have a statistically significant impact.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant combined influence of (Event-driven promotional strategies, marketing activities and digital marketing tactics) on sports tourism attraction.

Table 3: Multiple linear Regression showing the combined influence of (Event-driven promotional strategies, marketing activities and digital marketing tactics) on sports tourism attraction.

Predictor	B (Unstandardised)	Standard Error	Beta (Standardised)	t- value	p-value
(Constant)	0.812	0.278		2.92	0.004
Event-Driven Promotion	0.432	0.084	0.41	5.14	<0.001**
Marketing Activities,	0.375	0.092	0.35	4.07	<0.001**
Digital Marketing Tactics	0.215	0.086	0.19	2.50	0.013*

$p < .05$

The multiple regression results indicate that the combined influence of event-driven promotional strategies, marketing activities, and digital marketing tactics on sports tourism attraction is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis that there is “no significant combined influence.” All three predictors have positive coefficients ($B = 0.432$, 0.375 , and 0.215 , respectively), with event-driven promotion showing the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.41$), followed by marketing activities ($\beta = 0.35$) and digital marketing tactics ($\beta = 0.19$), and each has a p-value below 0.05 ($p < 0.001$, $p < 0.001$, and $p = 0.013$), confirming that these promotional and marketing dimensions collectively and individually contribute significantly to sports tourism attraction.

Discussion

This study examined the influence of marketing strategies on sports tourism attraction among residents in Ilorin Metropolis, Nigeria. Specifically, the research investigated the effects of event-driven

promotional strategies, general marketing activities, and digital marketing tactics on residents' attraction to sports tourism events. The findings provide empirical evidence on how different promotional approaches shape local tourism interest and participation.

The results revealed that event-driven promotional strategies significantly influence residents' attraction to sports tourism in Ilorin Metropolis. demonstrating that organised sporting competitions, festivals, and recreational events substantially increase residents' interest in sports tourism activities. These findings align with Higham and Hinch (2021), who affirmed that sports events significantly contribute to tourism promotion and destination branding by generating visitor interest and expanding tourism demand. Similarly, contemporary studies on sport event tourism emphasise that well-planned sporting events enhance community engagement and encourage tourism participation among residents (Getz & Page, 2020).

Ojo & Bamidele (2022) also corroborate and highlight the importance of sports events in promoting tourism development. Previous studies have shown that community sporting festivals, regional competitions, and inter-institutional tournaments stimulate local tourism activities and generate socio-economic benefits for host communities (Oyeniyi & Adeyemi, 2023). Such events foster community interaction, create entertainment opportunities, and encourage tourism consumption within local economies. The implication is that sports event organisers and tourism authorities should prioritise the organisation and effective promotion of sporting events as strategic instruments for enhancing sports tourism attraction.

The findings further demonstrate that marketing activities significantly influence residents' attraction to sports tourism in Ilorin Metropolis. This result indicates that marketing initiatives such as advertising campaigns, sponsorship programmes, public relations efforts, and community engagement strategies play a critical role in shaping residents' awareness and interest in sports tourism activities. The finding supports Kotler, Bowen, and Makens (2022), who reported that tourism marketing theory, which

posits that promotional activities influence consumer decision-making by creating awareness, generating interest, and motivating participation in tourism experiences. Müller, Scheu, and Preuss (2021) also buttressed that sport tourism contexts show consistent promotional campaigns significantly increase tourist participation and destination loyalty. In addition, strategic sponsorship collaborations and sport branding initiatives have been shown to enhance destination image and strengthen tourism competitiveness (Buhalis & Volchek, 2021).

The study by Adeleke and Aremu (2021) similarly emphasises the importance of structured marketing activities in promoting tourism development. For instance, research suggests that advertising campaigns, community engagement initiatives, and media partnerships can significantly enhance public awareness of sports tourism opportunities and stimulate tourism demand within urban destinations (Ogunjinmi & Ojo, 2024). Consequently, the findings suggest that sustained marketing communication strategies remain essential for strengthening sports tourism attraction in cities such as Ilorin.

The findings of the study also revealed that digital marketing tactics have a significantly stronger influence on residents' attraction to sports tourism in Ilorin Metropolis. This finding is in line with Sigala (2020), who submitted that digital marketing strategies significantly influence tourists' travel decisions by providing accessible information, interactive engagement opportunities, and personalised promotional messages (Gretzel, Koo, & Xiang, 2022). Social media platforms in particular play a crucial role in promoting sports tourism events because they enable organisers to share promotional content, encourage audience interaction, and generate user-created media that increases destination visibility (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2020).

Within Nigeria, increasing internet penetration and widespread smartphone adoption have further strengthened the relevance of digital marketing for tourism promotion. Recent studies by Ajayi and Olagunju (2023) indicate that digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube are increasingly used to promote tourism destinations and sporting events, thereby influencing residents'

tourism behaviour and participation decisions (Lawal & Akinwale, 2024). This suggests that tourism authorities and sports event organisers must prioritise digital marketing as a central component of sports tourism promotion.

The combined regression model revealed that event-driven promotion, marketing activities, and digital marketing tactics collectively predict residents' attraction to sports tourism in Ilorin Metropolis. These results indicate that sports tourism attraction is influenced by a multidimensional marketing framework rather than a single promotional strategy. The findings support contemporary sport marketing literature, which emphasises the importance of integrated marketing communication strategies in promoting tourism destinations. Integrated approaches combine traditional promotional techniques, event-based marketing, and digital communication channels to deliver consistent and persuasive messages to target audiences (Beech & Chadwick, 2021). Such coordinated strategies strengthen destination branding, enhance audience engagement, and increase the effectiveness of tourism promotion initiatives.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made

1. There are relationships among the Event-driven promotional strategies, marketing activities, digital marketing tactics and sports tourism attraction among residents in Ilorin Metropolis.
2. Event-driven promotional strategies, marketing activities and digital marketing tactics have a joint influence on sports tourism attraction among residents in Ilorin Metropolis.
3. Event-driven promotional strategies, marketing activities and digital marketing tactics have a combined influence on sports tourism attraction among residents in Ilorin Metropolis.

Recommendations

1. Sports tourism stakeholders in Ilorin Metropolis should deliberately design and sponsor regular, high-visibility sports events (e.g., local tournaments, fun runs, and community festivals) that are strongly linked to cultural and educational themes, to steadily build residents' awareness and participation in sports tourism initiatives.
2. Local marketers and tourism agencies should intensify offline and grassroots marketing activities such as targeted flyers, school- and community-based promotions, and partnerships with religious and social groups to create sustained interest and positive word-of-mouth about sports tourism opportunities among residents.
3. Destination managers should invest in coordinated digital marketing tactics, including active social media campaigns, engaging video content, and geo-targeted online ads on platforms commonly used by Ilorin residents, to increase visibility, interaction, and direct participation in sports tourism attractions.

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