

CONTEXTUALISING SPORT AND TOURISM IN CENTRAL AFRICA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract: Sport has been an integral part of the African lifestyle, and as such, in transitioning economies like those in the Central African subregion, where many people are not part of the mainstream economic activity, sport serves as a useful socio-economic getaway. In fact, the concept of sport-related tourism has grown significantly in prominence in the African context, especially in recent times. This is because, despite the existing issues linked to economic hardships, sport events are well-attended, providing a useful platform to kick-start certain socio-economic activities that are linked to local and regional tourism development. This article explores the stakeholder views on promoting tourism through sport, using Cameroon as a case study. Documentary reviews, incorporating semi-structured in-depth interviews with stakeholders involved in sport and tourism domains, reveal a set of structural challenges, as well as illuminating opportunities for development. The study has implications for policy and planning linked to sport tourism development in the Central African subregion.

Key words: Sport, tourism, challenges and prospects, tourism development stakeholders, Cameroon

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INTRODUCTION

Several studies have argued that the continued integration of sport activities and tourism has seen much emphasis being placed on the concept of sport tourism, leading to its rapid growth in the global economy in recent times (Bob & Swart, 2010; Gonzalez-Ramallal et al., 2010; Fourie & Santana-Gallego, 2011; Hinch & Higham, 2011; Ilies et al., 2014; Kennelly & Toohey, 2014; Taleghani & Ghafary, 2014; Marumo et al., 2015; Reis et al., 2015; Odounga-Othy & Swart, 2016; Njoroge et al., 2017; Nyikana, 2016; Ilies et al.,

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2018; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018; Tichaawa et al., 2018). The aforementioned studies have consistently provided the narrative on how the growth experienced by global sport tourism has largely been influenced by the consistent, but parallel, growth of both sport and tourism respectively, and the important roles that both have played in global economic conditions. Resultantly, their frequent overlapping has contributed to the significant developments in sport tourism, particularly in the developing world context (Fourie & Santana-Gallego, 2011; Tichaawa et al., 2018; Zang et al., 2018), and with specific reference to destinations in the sub-Saharan Africa, where sport is seen as a way of life, in the face of limited socio-economic opportunities. The existing research has equally begun to acknowledge that, in Africa, sport tourism has the potential to ignite and promote the socio-economic restructuring of urban and rural economies (Swart & Bob, 2007; Honary et al., 2010; Lesjak et al., 2017; Tichaawa et al., 2018). In their study, Bob and Swart (2010), for example, identified the crucial part that sport plays in tourism's role as an urban regeneration tool for such destinations, further confirming the symbiotic nature of the two and its relevance thereto. However, combining sport and tourism as a means to rejuvenate ailing economies in Africa, in particular, has proven to be somewhat cumbersome, given that it is often viewed as being simply an overlap between two different areas of the economy (Weed & Bull, 2004; Tichaawa et al., 2018). Kennelly and Toohey (2014) note the historical separation of the agencies and departments responsible for sport and tourism as one of the key impediments to the prosperity of sport tourism in the developing context, suggesting that, often, the endeavours in this regard fail, due to the lack of planning being geared towards collaboration in this regard. In essence, the lack of collaboration is mostly common at the levels of planning, policy and especially in the implementation of those plans and policies (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018). Other studies (Weed & Bull, 2004; Tichaawa et al., 2018) have underscored how, irrespective of the similar interests between the two, specific liaison is often limited, or, at times, non-existent, and, therefore, highly compromising of the mutual advantages and benefits that otherwise would have been accrued by both those in tourism and those in sport. Such accrual is in line with the framework designed by the likes of Standeven and De Knop (1999), Gammon and Robinson (2004), and Weed and Bull (2004).

In this study, we argue that, despite the rapid growth experienced by sport and tourism on the African continent, and specifically in Central Africa, limited research exists on the examination of the effective linkages for sport and tourism. This is in spite of the growing focus on the hosting of small-scale and major sport tourism events in the subregion (Tichaawa & Bob, 2015; Njoroge et al., 2017; Swart et al., 2018). The hosting of events in the region has been justified by the perceptible gains that have been observed by the developed countries, in terms of which small-scale, major and mega-events are seen as expediting socio-economic development linked to infrastructure development, and general tourism benefits, especially for the local population, among other publicised benefits. In fact, the observations made on sport tourism in the developed world show how sport event-hosting is seen as a sustainable objective for tourism development, especially for the local communities, because the investments that are made in the initial stages are made with the intention of serving the communities in the long term (see Swart & Bob, 2007; Gibson et al., 2012; Csoban & Serra, 2014; Nyikana et al., 2014). Given the fact that not all destinations have the capacity to host both major and mega-events (Ziakas & Costa, 2011), developing countries are often encouraged to consider a portfolio of events that considers smaller-scale events (Swart & Bob, 2007; Gibson et al., 2012; Tichaawa et al., 2018). This study is argued from this perspective, while also considering that, in Central Africa, many people have a very limited involvement in the mainstream economy, and that, as such, sport serves as a getaway from their daily economic hardships

(Pannenberg, 2008). Citizenry in this region are greatly dedicated and committed to, as well as passionate about, sport, particularly football, which, therefore, points to the existence of sport development opportunities (Pannenberg, 2008; Tichaawa & Swart, 2010). To the above effect, we seek to determine the prospects and the challenges associated with sport tourism in the Central Africa subregion. The above is achieved by way of examining the nature of the stakeholders involved in tourism and sport in Cameroon. The focus on Cameroon is considered appropriate, given the fact that it is the largest economy in the region, with a strong history in sport both locally and internationally (Pannenberg, 2008; Tichaawa & Swart, 2010). The paper is structured, initially, to provide a background of the subregion, followed by a theoretical grounding in the research. The paper continues with a literature review of sport tourism, and of the opportunities and challenges that either promote, or hinder, sport tourism development. A brief overview of the methods adopted follows, while a discussion of the findings and the recommendations is provided. Lastly, conclusions are drawn, based on the findings noted in the study.

THE CENTRAL AFRICAN SUBREGION IN CONTEXT

The Central African subregion has been identified as an area that possesses great potential as a sustainable tourism destination, even though it still lags behind in comparison to Western, Eastern and Southern Africa (Kimbu, 2011; Kimbu & Tichaawa, 2018). In his work, Kimbu (2011) argues that the subregion has been unable to position or promote itself properly, despite being made up of traditionally endowed nations like Cameroon and Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, and the Congo, among others. According to Swart et al. (2018), sport, and specifically sport tourism events in this region, has been identified as an alternative form of revenue generation, given the inability to maximise the current potential that it possesses as far as tourism development is concerned. Moreover, the lack of recognised linkages between sport and tourism within the economies concerned means that there is seldom any effective collaboration, so that, subsequently, many sport tourism policy initiatives prove unsuccessful (Kimbu, 2011; Nyikana & Tichaawa; 2018, Swart et al., 2018). The above could be linked to Kennelly and Toohey's (2014) suggestion that sport and tourism, within such a context, have two separate cultures, which are especially linked to funding, with sport traditionally receiving much public sector subsidy and intervention, whereas tourism is largely private sector- driven. Nonetheless, sport tourism remains a key priority area in the subregion, with the sector being earmarked to assist in the socio-economic and political transformation objectives involved (Swart et al., 2018). To contextualise the situation further, Swart et al. (2018) suggest that the region still grapples with concerns about the lack of infrastructural development, the limited ancillary facilities, and an inability to capitalise on the branding opportunities presented by such events, which is a view that is closely shared by Kimbu (2012) in prior related work. Numerous challenges exist for the development of a vibrant sport industry, which, in turn, affect tourism's potential in the region (Kimbu, 2012; Tichaawa et al., 2018). These, and other, challenges are explored later on in the current paper.

THEORETICAL BASIS

The theoretical basis of the present research endeavour emanates from the design of the stakeholder theory. According to Garrod et al. (2012), the stakeholder theory is not a new phenomenon, as it is largely considered one that has been widely used in business and tourism studies, as well as being a generally accepted topic in terms of past political discourses and academics. Freeman is a researcher who is credited with contributing significantly to the theoretical development of the concept, particularly in the 1980s

(Garrod et al., 2012; Lewis, 2006). Later, Presenza and Iocca (2012) posit that the theory has evolved in reference to the various groups and individuals who can affect an organisation, as well as in terms of the behaviour of management in response to such groups and individuals. According to Freeman (2001:38), “stakeholders are those groups or individuals who have a stake in, or a claim on, a firm, within the ambit of the business discipline involved”. Garrod et al. (2012) then show how the success of a development or organisation largely hinges on the ability to address the requirements and aspirations of a wider array of groups that normally have their own particular interests in the said development. The above commentators suggest that the stakeholder theory directs the organisations to optimise the benefits of their operations, through effectively engaging with all their legitimate stakeholders. In summation of the broad theoretical overview, the aforementioned analysts suggest that stakeholders be distinguished into primary and secondary stakeholders, with the primary having formal, official and contractual links to the development, whereas the secondary stakeholders are those with no formalised links.

In the tourism context, Aas et al. (2005, p. 31) define a stakeholder as “anyone who is impacted on by development positively or negatively”. According to Garrod et al. (2012), the stakeholder theory, while being developed largely in regard to the study of business strategy, has, in recent times, been incorporated in tourism planning and policy, as well as in some forms of collaborative actions, like destination marketing in particular. Given the complex nature of tourism, which is a fragmented industry in terms of which tourism products basically involve interaction between a large numbers of suppliers coming from a wide range of economic sectors, the theory is necessary, especially regarding the management of the stakeholders (Garrod et al., 2012). Specifically in the sport tourism and events context, Presenza and Iocca (2012) note that stakeholders in the sport and events management field comprise those individuals and groups who have a stake in an event and its outcomes, which is inclusive of all those who participate in the production of the event, the sponsors and the grant givers, the host community and its representatives, as well as any other persons who are impacted on by the event. Garrod et al. (2012) affirm that the stakeholders in the sport tourism context are also drawn from the private sector, the public sector, and those who are involved in voluntary work, which further complicates the process of sport tourism development. The above is exacerbated further in the developing nation context, where constant reshuffles in the socio- and geo-political arrangements are a frequent occurrence.

In any case, and in relation to any development, it is critical, firstly, to identify all stakeholders, and then to review what their respective agendas are regarding the development (Presenza & Iocca, 2012). By doing so, the managers and other authorities are able to balance the needs and expectations of all the stakeholders concerned. Grimble (1998) stresses the need to conduct a stakeholder analysis, as doing so facilitates the recognition of the different interest groups involved, with it also helping to identify and resolve any standoffs or conflicts of interest occurring in reference to the sport event. As mentioned earlier, in the tourism field, the delivery of relevant offerings is complicated by the fragmented nature of the industry, which, typically, involves the interactions that are engaged in by a large number of suppliers from different economic sectors, including accommodation, tour operation, transport, entertainment, visitor attractions, and events, among others (Garrod et al., 2012). According to Presenza and Iocca (2012), the success of tourism, and of tourism events in particular, is largely dependent on the fruitfulness of planned interactions between the event owners and other stakeholders. The absence of such interactions, or the laxity in the emphasis thereon, inevitably leads to sport tourism events not achieving the same result in terms of contributions to both local and regional tourism development.

Sport tourism events, when successfully managed, can play a significant role in the socio-economic development of regions (Prezenza & Iocca, 2012; Radicchi, 2013). Radicchi (2013) suggests that sport tourism events have the potential to serve as crucial resources for development in developing countries.

Specifically, sport events are seen as providing a valuable platform for socio-economic growth, especially as they are linked to employment opportunities for locals, to infrastructural development, and to improved access to information, as well as to the effective branding for a destination, which ultimately leads to enhanced destination attractiveness (Hemmonsby & Tichaawa, 2018; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018). Besides the above, Nyikana and Tichaawa (2018), as well as Tichaawa (2017), note how sport events provide an ideal environment on which local businesses can capitalise for the opportunity provided, particularly in terms of those that are small and medium-sized, which, in turn, assists the economy of the local areas where such events are hosted.

However, for the above to be achieved, strong collaboration and cooperation on the common objectives is required among the relevant stakeholders (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018), which is the central theme for the current study. Historically, Grimble's (1998) work notes how many projects and events have failed to come to fruition, because of non-cooperation between the stakeholders, or due to stakeholders having otherwise raised concerns regarding their perceived beliefs in potentially being adversely affected by the changes caused by collaboration.

To overcome such challenges, a positive spirit of dialogue and collaboration is encouraged among the stakeholders involved in the sport and tourism disciplines (Aas et al., 2005), particularly in the Cameroonian context (Kimbu, 2012; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018). In the context of the arguments presented, the main standpoint is that, for sport to be effectively used in the promotion of tourism in a context like Cameroon, the relevant stakeholders should, firstly, be identified and profiled in relation to what their interests are in the process. Moreover, such stakeholders are crucial in providing useful information that could be used in determining the challenges and prospects of sport tourism, as in the present study's case.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The available literature on sport tourism development states that the most common type of sport tourism activity consists of events ranging from small-scale, through major, to hallmark and mega-events (Bama & Tichaawa, 2012; Swart & Bob, 2007; Gibson et al., 2012; Csoban & Serra, 2014; Tichaawa & Bob, 2015). However, according to Gibson et al., 2012, developing countries, like those in the Central African subregion, have specifically targeted the hosting of small-scale and major events, based on the belief that such hosting might expedite development in key economic areas like infrastructure, as well as accrue tourism benefits for the local people, and thereby assist in ensuring sustainability in relation to tourism development on behalf of the local communities. In their study, Nyikana and Tichaawa (2018) point to the economics and to the wider tourism benefits that can be accrued as a key premise considered by the developing nations in their adoption of an aggressive approach towards sport tourism events hosting. The above is particularly seen in the case where such benefits are seen as strategic objectives, in both the short and the long term (Briedenhann, 2011; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018; Tichaawa & Harilal, 2016; Tichaawa et al., 2018).

However, the key challenge, according to Ziakas and Costa (2011), is that not all destinations can host major and mega-events, due to the lack of capacity and the mixed results associated with such events. Instead, destinations, particularly in the developing context, compile a portfolio of sport events that is mainly targeted at a series of small-

scale events (Ziakas & Costa, 2011; Gibson et al., 2012; Nyikana, 2016). Some scholars (see, for example, Hinch & Higham, 2011) have, in the past, emphasised that such targeting is due to small-scale events having either proven to comprise a viable sector of an existing tourism industry, or having provided a reason to visit a certain community, if, previously, no viable tourism sector existed in the area concerned. Moreover, sport tourism, and small-scale events in particular, are recognised for their ability to create economic value for the community concerned, with most of the expenditure involved being attributed to the accommodation and catering sectors.

Gibson et al., (2012) strongly hold the view that, unlike in the case of mega-events, small-scale sport tourism events tend to utilise the already existing facilities, as well as attracting visitors, who are otherwise unlikely to have visited the area, to the host community's locale. In addition, such small-scale events tend to provide an income for the local businesses, both in terms of the tourism industry and beyond.

In many developing countries, like Cameroon, the promotion of sport tourism, especially in terms of small-scale sport tourism events, is seen as a strategic development objective for the government concerned (Csoban & Serra, 2014). For example, the Cameroon government is actively involved in developing such events through participation in sport (Tichaawa & Swart, 2010; Tichaawa & Bob, 2015; Tichaawa et al., 2018). Hinch and Higham (2001) advocate the integration of sport and tourism in terms of government policy, strategic planning, the development of facilities and services, urban planning, and promotion, because of the obvious interrelationship and overlap between the different aspects concerned, as was previously highlighted. Misener et al. (2013) concur that, in recent times, due to the growing emphasis on improving the amount of participation in social and sport policy at many destinations, sport development has become a focus point for policymakers.

The above is because governments see the development of sport as consisting of part of a broader programme of community development, beyond the actual sport itself. However, according to Nunkoo and Smith (2013), African governments tend to rely on achieving a certain amount of political support from their citizenry, as well as from other stakeholders, for their policies to prosper, especially in the case of those that are geared towards sport tourism development.

The above includes ensuring that the citizens have some capacity to mobilise themselves towards development, rather than just towards acquiring resources once-off (Misener et al., 2013). In the above regard, sport is seen as a key vehicle for development in communities, because community development broadly occurs through sport participation, as guided by the relevant policies (Misener et al., 2013).

Jakovlev et al. (2017) point out that, in present times, given the global market and its contemporary conditions, the relationship between sport and tourism is seen as a strategic point for advancing the goal of world tourism. However, Devine et al. (2011) contend that tourism planning and policy development tend to take place within a framework that is so complex that it is beyond any single public sector organisational unit's scope. For example, Misener et al. (2013) suggest that sport development occurs at multiple levels, including at the levels of local organisations, of individuals whose focus is on the specific requirements of sport, of national agencies, of volunteers, of the public, of the commercial sectors, as well as of transnational organisations, whose main roles include establishing policy and exerting influence through funding. More importantly, it is the organisational partnerships and collaborations between the stakeholders that assist in maximising the complex phenomenon that is sport tourism (Misener et al., 2013; Kennelly & Toohey, 2014). As such, the development of sport tourism should be considered as an issue that exceeds the ambit of sport and tourism

agencies alone. The researchers in question argue that sport and tourism exist within the expanse of a broad political arena that also includes public agencies that are involved in making and delivering policy in such areas as events, outdoor recreation, and heritage, among others. They, therefore, suggest that the linkages between sport and tourism, especially in relation to collaboration, are likely to be highly sensitive to the political climate within the destination or country concerned, giving rise to discussion regarding its challenges and prospects.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current study employed a qualitative research design, wherein in-depth, face-to-face semi-structured interviews (on a one-on-one basis) were held with the stakeholders involved in sport and tourism, within the government and private sector sport tourism in Cameroon. The above was done with a view to soliciting relevant information for the study's objectives from among the key resource personnel who could provide insights regarding sport and tourism development in context. Accordingly, sixteen (16) interviews with stakeholders from different tiers of government and the private sector were conducted, in Douala, Yaoundé, Bamenda, and Buea, being four (4) of the country's major cities (see Table 1 below for the relevant details).

Table 1. List of stakeholders interviewed (n=16)

Sector	Organisation	Place	#
Major sponsor	MTN Cameroon	Douala	2
National government	Ministry of Tourism and Leisure	Douala	2
Provincial government	Ministry of Sport and Physical Education (Regional Delegation)	Douala	2
Private sector	Accommodation establishment owner	Yaounde	2
Private sector	Tour guide	Buea	2
NGO	Table tennis coach	Yaounde	2
Private sector	Sports agency – football agent	Douala	2
Local government	Local economic development – local council	Bamenda	2

A purposive sampling technique was initially used to select the stakeholders, on the basis of their knowledge of sport and tourism development objectives, and on their perceptions and experiences of, as well as their roles and activities in, sport tourism generally. Moreover, the selection criteria were also based on the organisations for which they worked, and their involvement in sport and/or tourism, accordingly. A snowball technique was then employed, wherein the selected respondents were asked to refer the researchers to other stakeholders whom they knew would possess the required information around the topic. All of the interviews were conducted personally by the researchers, with, in some cases, a translator, who was conversant in the domains of sport and tourism, being used to assist with the French-to-English language interviews.

The interviews were conducted with prior consent having been sought from all the respondents, and a general interview guide having been made available to all the participants, with the guide containing the broad themes to be explored in the interview process. All the interviews took place at a predetermined location, which was deemed suitable for both parties, and which, in most cases, was the workplace of the respondents. The interview guide was developed as a means of keeping the interview within a specific corridor of focus and scope, while also allowing for reasonable flexibility to probe certain aspects further, and to seek clarification regarding certain issues raised. The adoption of such an approach ensured that the experiences and expertise of the interviewees were

explored in depth, with the purpose of obtaining a wealth of information. The questions posed were largely informed by a combination of the objectives of the study, as well as by a thorough literature review process, which revealed the broad themes of focus. Typical questions asked included: 'How is your organisation involved in developing sport/tourism?', 'According to your knowledge, do relationships exist between the ministries of sport and tourism in Cameroon?', 'Why does your organisation sponsor sport-related events?', and 'What are the challenges to developing a vibrant sport tourism sector in Cameroon?' The interviews were approximately between 45 and 55 minutes long. The respondents were made aware, prior to the interview commencing, of the electronic tape recorder that was used to record the responses in the interviews.

In addition to the above, the researchers made notes to supplement the recorded work, and to further highlight some of the key issues raised during the interviews. The recordings were later downloaded onto a computer, transcribed verbatim, and thematically analysed in terms of the content analytical technique. The keywords that were selected from each transcript were converted into meaningful themes that were then analysed, in line with the predetermined objectives of the research. Throughout the process, the transcripts and themes were constantly checked against the recordings and the notes made by the researchers, in an effort to ensure reliability and validity. Historical documents and policy papers were then used to contextualise the results.

RESULTS DISCUSSIONS

The results generated from the interviews based on prospects and challenges were grouped into themes, namely: infrastructure development; informal trading opportunities; branding opportunities; domestic tourism opportunities; and the disconnect between sport and tourism officials, as detailed below.

CHALLENGES

Limited infrastructure

As mentioned previously, a key area for sport development, which serves as a useful purpose for tourism, is infrastructure development (Gibson et al., 2012; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018). Infrastructure is a key area for tourism-related concerns, and, in Central Africa, like much of the rest of the African continent, it is still an area that requires much investment (Kimbu, 2012; Tichaawa & Bob, 2015; Schmitz & Tsobgou, 2016; Tichaawa, 2017). The results clearly showed that infrastructure generally, but specifically that which was linked to sport, was considered as a major challenge linked to sport tourism development. The respondents point to the poor state of sport-related infrastructure that exists as a challenge. The criticism of such infrastructure was linked to its state in the country, as was revealed by a respondent asking the question: "How can you develop sport tourism in the country with the poor state of sport facilities in the country?" The roads and transport infrastructure leading to the current sport venues themselves were considered to be substandard, to say the least.

The above-mentioned area is worthy of attention, with it being of great concern if sport tourism is to be developed as a vibrant sector for Cameroon and the neighbouring countries. The interviewees argued that, in a country like Cameroon, where the tourism infrastructure and superstructure is largely underdeveloped, owing to structural issues, sport can assist in expediting some of the related development. While the existing situation might change, owing to the hosting of the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), the concerns that were shared by the stakeholders were mainly linked to the extent of the maintenance of the related infrastructure, and to how the local citizens would be likely to benefit accordingly. In addition, the stakeholders' arguments were,

ergo, the fact that sport and tourism often share the same facilities and infrastructure, and, as such, any investment in the sport infrastructure would, in any case, most likely serve to fast-track tourism development. For example, a senior manager of MTN Cameroon (a major sponsor of sport development in Cameroon, and in the subregion under investigation), when quizzed on the main challenges to sport tourism development in Cameroon, noted that “there are very few people or organisations that invest in sport, and big companies are not really putting their money into sports like football, perhaps because of the lack of professionalism of the sports federations. So, therefore, the main challenge is the lack of development in infrastructure, because the state (i.e. the government) is currently focusing on investing on major events, like the AFCON, but more is needed in the local context, in terms of amateur football or sport.”

The main issues raised by the stakeholders in relation to the infrastructure and its development are that, while the development of sport might assist in enhancing the tourism infrastructure, and vice versa, many grey areas still remain, especially in terms of the current sociopolitical climate in Cameroon. For example, a representative from the national tourism office (i.e. the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure) mentioned: “There is a lack of harmonisation, due to the involvement of so many different ministers, like those of sport, tourism, transport, culture, etc. So the lack of collaboration between them means that no one person will be able to provide requisite infrastructure, and these are people who are in charge of [the] improvement of [the] sports infrastructure.” Another main issue to emerge was that, while some investments had been made in the sport infrastructure, the leveraging thereof tended to be minimal, in the sense that, despite stadium upgrades being done, scant follow-up investments occurred beyond those that were made in terms of the stadium and the space in which to develop sport. Within such a context, it is evident that, while there is true potential for sport to be used as a tool to promote tourism, in certain contexts the situation is complicated by the sociopolitical complexities within the government structures, as was evidenced in the current study. As Rogerson (2013) argues, the absence of committed investment in complementary facilities for tourism and sport, and which was specifically linked to the infrastructure responding to the needs of tourism development, remains a key impediment for a sport tourism-led economic drive in much of sub-Saharan Africa.

Insufficient financing of sport tourism events

A major challenge that was mentioned by all the stakeholders interviewed was the lack of finances involved, which they perceived to challenge the development of sport tourism. On the one hand, the respondents mentioned that, while the local populace was enthusiastic about sport, and attended events as a way of “escaping socio-economic realities”, the limited investments made in such events (both amateur and professional), by both the government and the public sector, meant that the profiles of those attending such events were limited to those individuals whose main reason for their attendance was limited to the social, as opposed to the economic, effects thereof, resulting in non-leverage of the event. Resultantly, a lack of finance was perceived to have limited the growth, involvement and participation related thereto.

In addition, the documents that were obtained from government sources showed that the investments that had been made in terms of the development of sport were fairly recent, and, in most cases, short term, with the view to satisfying either the participant, or the event. The lack of a long-term view in regards to sustainable investment in sport denies the possibility of such investment being leveraged for local economic development and for entrepreneurial opportunities. However, the challenge cannot be viewed in isolation, as it is closely linked to the aforementioned challenges, in terms of the lack of investment in the existing infrastructure.

The disconnect in the management of sport and tourism

The disconnect, and the lack of integration and cooperation, in terms of policy and strategy emerged as a major challenge in the documentary analysis. The situation was further confirmed in the interviews that were conducted with representatives in the sport and tourism domains in Cameroon. As was previously raised in the literature review, a main constraint on the developing of sport tourism in Africa, and in using one domain to advance the other, is the lack of collaboration, in terms of which the two are viewed as a mere occasional overlap (Hinch & Higham, 2001; Weed & Bull, 2004; Hinch & Higham, 2011; Kennelly & Toohey, 2014; Taleghani & Ghafary, 2014; Tichaawa et al., 2018). In the current study, the representatives of the different organisations opined that their departments were solely there to focus on their mandate, being to promote and develop tourism and sport, because, as one respondent put it, “we are here to promote our sole mandate and [to] deliver on it”. A similar view was held by a number of the stakeholders concerned, including policymakers in government and administrators. While the interviews indicated that the stakeholders involved acknowledged the significant role of sport tourism events as a means of transforming the host destinations, collaboration was noted as being essential (see Swart et al., 2018). However, the historical political separation of the two areas is often evidenced in the government structures, where, despite the common areas of interest, sport and tourism are often represented by different agencies and ministries, who operate independently of each other, and who, often, fail to collaborate (Kennelly & Toohey, 2014, Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018). The above was, perhaps, the most commonly flagged constraint to sport tourism development in Cameroon mentioned by the respondents. The common perception of highly centralised decision-making, which tends to neglect the voices of those in the lower levels of government, was indicated as being very common. The envisaged symphony of the government, in terms of policymaking, and at various echelons of the government, which the Cameroonian government is striving to achieve, is rather far-fetched in terms of realisation. The stakeholders, in particular, felt that the “hierarchy in most departments assigned tasks to each person which they were to do on a daily basis without questioning, and anything beyond those tasks they were not to do ... they cannot go against what the hierarchy asked them to do and were to only stay in that defined channel”.

Despite the above scenario, responses were received from the respondents that showed that, at certain points, interactions occurred between the stakeholders, for example between the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure and the Ministry of Sport and Physical Education, in terms of the hosting of sport events (during the events themselves). However, the critique in the above regard is that the interactions were either highly coincidental, or very short-term in nature. For example, one stakeholder went as far as suggesting that, “when you bring regional people from sports, we discuss the benefits, but whatever we discuss will not mean anything, because they themselves do not have much to say as far as the planning and implementation is concerned. It is all done at the highest level.” The above implies that there are some intentions to collaborate at the highest level, perhaps by the ministers concerned, but, at the operational level, the above only occurs coincidentally, and, even where it has been planned for, it is not practical enough to allow those working to fulfil their intentions.

OPPORTUNITIES

Promoting the informal business sector

Sport events have been noted as an effective vehicle for driving local economic development, especially through their ability to create employment opportunities for the

host communities involved, as linked to entrepreneurial and other business opportunities (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018). Indeed, some studies on business tourism in Africa (see, for example, Rogerson, 2011; Tichaawa, 2017) record the notable emergence of a low-income economy in terms of the informal sector, which is ever-present across the continent, and which is expanding to fill the event spaces as well. Tichaawa (2017) points out that the existence of the strong presence of local entrepreneurs, who capitalise on the events as a platform from which to sell their goods, whether they be of a formal or informal nature. The author, in particular, notes how, in Cameroon, a large increase has occurred in the number of informal traders, who are commonly referred to in the context concerned as 'buyam-sellams', and who use such events as a springboard for making economic gains from sport and tourism.

The traders buy items from the markets, and sell them at the stadium and its precinct, thereby capitalising on the opportunity for business that is presented by sport. In the current study, the respondents acknowledge that the sport events undoubtedly present opportunities for the transacting of informal business, especially regarding food and drink items, as well as sport-related merchandise. However, a different approach than before should be adopted to the above-mentioned area of endeavour, for there to be a meaningful impact on the host communities involved. As one respondent raised, a key challenge is "the failure and inability of stakeholders to come together [which] leads to a lack of focus beyond the event itself, unlike in other successful countries like South Africa, where event attendance is clearly leveraged to see how local people can be presented with business opportunities". Another respondent, from the Regional Youth and Sport Delegation, said: "When the athletes and their followers are not engaged in sport, they have to eat, they have to go to the informal markets to experience other things that they do not eat in their places of origin". The above shows that sport events in Cameroon and in Central Africa generally can play an important role in presenting entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly for unemployed youths and for the relatively well-educated populace of the relevant communities (Tichaawa, 2017).

Destination branding

The concept of branding of destinations through sport events is a relatively new one in tourism studies (Nyikana et al., 2014; Hemmonsbeey & Tichaawa, 2018; Zang et al., 2018). According to Hemmonsbeey and Tichaawa (2018), emerging destinations have concerned themselves with using sport as a platform for their branding activities, so as to be able to create memorable destination brands. The researchers concerned argue that the exercise is concluded on the basis of having realised how effective sport can be as a powerful agent for destination branding and profiling. Zang et al. (2018) also note that, in the case of many emerging destinations, sport and sporting events, in particular, feature as key elements of destination branding. In the current study, the interviewed stakeholders were highly critical of the inability to capitalise on sport to brand Cameroon as a desirable tourism destination.

For the most part, the inability is intensely linked to all the other aspects raised, as they felt that, for the relevant authorities to capitalise on the existing branding opportunities, collaboration, investment in infrastructure and a concerted effort by all involved would improve output. As an example of the above, a senior manager in the marketing section of MTN posed the question of the strategic maximising of branding opportunities, based on similar observations in other destinations: "The question of using sport to develop a country like Cameroon, especially in terms of tourism, is not being done right, because, in countries like Brazil, this has been done successfully, but, in Cameroon, nobody is investing in it. Cameroon is hosting the 2019 AFCON, but I'm still wondering what we are going to show people who come, or watch, the Cup."

A common feeling among the respondents was that, despite Cameroon being a very strong African football nation, basic branding and marketing activities still need to be undertaken. An instance of such would be the establishment of a football museum, for those who have followed the national team from its historic start of becoming the first African country ever to reach the quarter-finals of the FIFA World Cup in 1990, or from when they won a gold medal at the Summer Olympic Games of 2000 (Tichaawa, 2013). The respondents expressed a feeling that such products as the example given above would have a certain association with Cameroon, and that they would, therefore, assist in bringing sport enthusiasts to the country beyond the event itself. Tichaawa (2013) places the above view in context by saying that the historical success of the Cameroon national team, especially during the FIFA World Cup in 1990, captured the imagination of the world, as the country was then seen as an intriguing place to visit, with the national soccer team even being coined 'the Brazilians of Africa'.

However, the follow-up on the brand was lacking, which resulted in the significance of the image dying down over time, which was a point that was commonly raised by the respondents in the current study. Besides the above, Hemmonsbey and Tichaawa (2018) note that, in the developing countries, capitalising on the branding opportunities that are presented by sport is often complicated by the tendency to focus on other social issues, despite the fact that sport is seen as an opportunity for diverting such attention momentarily. Harilal et al. (2018) suggest that the above could largely be attributed to the fact that, often, countries such as Cameroon do not have the necessary supporting policies in place to capitalise on such opportunities. The lack of policies and guiding frameworks means that stakeholders cannot be mobilised to contribute effectively towards sport tourism development (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2013).

Promoting domestic tourism

Sport tourism, and sport tourism events in particular, have been acknowledged for the multitude of benefits that they bring to hosting destinations, with a major benefit for the countries being their ability to kick-start, or to promote, domestic tourism (Swart et al., 2018; Tichaawa et al., 2018). The above is particularly important in the context of Cameroon, where, due to a lack of policies, as indicated above (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2013, Tichaawa, 2017; Harilal et al., 2018), there tends to be a focus on international tourism, while the domestic tourism market is neglected. Such a fact flies in the face of the recent evidence suggesting the great potential for domestic tourism, especially in terms of it being linked to event attendance, because many people travel all over the country to participate in, and to attend, sport tourism events (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018). In the current study, the above was also evident, with all the respondents acknowledging the important role that sport tourism plays in promoting a culture of domestic tourism.

Interestingly, the respondents suggested that sport tourism participation in Cameroon is especially linked to the visiting of friends and relatives (VFR), who reside in different areas across the country. As one respondent indicated, "While there is a general lack of tourism culture in Cameroon, domestic tourism is important, because a lot of people travel from one area to another, usually spending three or four days at an uncle's or brother's place. They normally travel to that relative with things to sell which are not available in the local area. Then they also leave there having bought unique items which they can sell back in their normal place of residence. So, therefore, domestic tourism plays this important role, and sport events help promote this type of travel ..."

CONCLUSION


The present study analysed the challenges and the prospect of developing sport tourism within the Central African subregion, with specific reference to Cameroon. The

study, which was focused on various sport and tourism stakeholders, took the form of stakeholder interviews. For the most part, the findings revealed that sport can assist a country like Cameroon and those in the region (i.e. Central Africa), through providing socio-economic opportunities, like infrastructure development, which, in turn, could potentially be expanded, to the overall benefit of tourism. Moreover, the stakeholders all acknowledged that sport, particularly sport events, presents an ideal platform for informal business activity, which is a much-needed requirement for unemployed youths, and, if harnessed as such, might lead to a vibrant entrepreneurial culture among those in need of such. In addition, the potential for sport to be used as a branding tool is acknowledged, even though the possibility of attaining success with such a tool remains a current concern for the stakeholders concerned. However, the key impediments to success include the disconnect in the policies that are linked to the development of sport and tourism, particularly in terms of the lack of collaboration between the ministries that are responsible for both. Such findings are generally applicable to the central African subregion, and especially to the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), which is a subregion consisting of countries like Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Congo, and the Central African Republic (Odounga-Othy & Swart, 2016, Tichaawa, 2017), because the countries share similar sociopolitical characteristics. Therefore, despite the great potential for tourism development that is shown by the countries identified, the existing structural challenges limit the potential of the region. The study, therefore, makes a modest contribution to the existing literature in terms of sport tourism development. For the subregion, it has become important, at a practical level, to leverage the opportunities presented by sport tourism, for example. The above could be achieved by establishing, and promoting, partnerships between the key stakeholders, such as those in the private sector and those in the public arena, especially in the arena of sport events. Doing the above would ensure that, irrespective of their differing objectives, there are mutual benefits to be gained by both the public and the private sector parties. The study, therefore, advocates for a more focused and integrative theoretical and practical approach to be taken, in terms of which the stakeholders purposefully plan collectively for sport and tourism development, with a view to promoting a sustainable sector that is able to benefit the local communities, and to improve visitor experiences in the communities.

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