

Investigating Sporting Event as a Self-development Option Through Rural Tourism Development in Southeast, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the potentialities of rural sports (with emphasis on the popular yuletide sporting events) with regard to sports tourism development in rural communities of Southeast Nigeria. Four paradigms (perceptions, arrivals, impacts and safety issues) were used for this investigation. However, ten rural communities with a history of such events were conveniently sampled from the five states of the region in Nigeria. Yaro Yemene's formula aided the sampling of 400 respondents for the distribution of semi-structured questionnaires. In addition, cluster and purposive sampling techniques were further used to select forty key informants for the study. Chi Square and descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of data. The result of the study shows that this yuletide sporting event has potentialities to enhance sports tourism development in the rural areas judging from the information from the four paradigms. The implication of the study is that it has opened another self-development option for rural communities in Nigeria. This study has contributed to responsive rural development in traditional African communities through the opportunities of local sports.

Keywords: Yuletide sporting event, rural tourism development, perception, impact, safety

Introduction

Yuletide otherwise known as Christmas is a period mapped out by Christians all over the globe to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ (Khan et al., 2018). Although there is no known calendrical evidence of Jesus' birth day. Early Christians have adopted the 25th day of December of every year as a day to celebrate the birth of Christ. Today, Christmas has become one of the greatest Christian celebrations. This notwithstanding, some Christian denominations have chosen not to conform to this seemingly consensus day (Li & Zhang, 2010; Khan et al., 2018). In most parts of Christendom globally, people make holiday travels during this period for leisure, contacts, ceremonies, and/or to reunite with relatives. This contributed to the huge traffic of persons and vehicles during this period (Miller, 2017). More so, this understanding of Yuletide has motivated the fixing of a series of activities within this period, ranging from meetings,

traditional events like burials, funerals, traditional marriage rites, naming ceremonies, festivals, masquerading among others to sporting activities. These activities which are aimed at making yuletide celebrations in Christian dominated localities worthwhile are referred to as yuletide events. However, yuletide sporting events refer to those sporting activities that are usually fixed within this period to entertain and keep people busy during the yuletide (Pinson, 2017; Bazzanella et al., 2019; Herbold et al., 2020).

In Southeast Nigeria, football competition is the dominant sporting activity found in most communities during the yuletide. These football competitions are organised in the various traditional communities in the rural areas to engage the youths and other returnees for the yuletide celebrations in these rural areas. Over the years, this local football competition during the yuletide has become one of the major motivations for travel during this period (Pinson, 2017; Abujamous et al., 2019; Wanyonyi et al., 2021). In southeast Nigeria, greater numbers of people travel from their various abroad bases to their traditional communities to reunite with their loved ones and enjoy these local sporting events. This is a great motivation for sports tourism development in these rural areas. Hence the continued search for alternatives to boost rural economies (Nyikana, 2016).

More so, Wickramaratne and Kumari (2016) see sports tourism as travel outside one's usual locality to observe and enjoy one or more sporting events. Such travels are most of the time focused on organized sporting activities with schedules. Of recent, sports tourism has become one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry due to its tendency to provide opportunities for leisure, entertainment, contacts and healthy living (Nyikana, 2016; Wickramaratne & Kumari, 2016; Chavan, 2020). Sports tourism is one aspect of tourism that has projected many localities, regions and nations to an enviable status in the global village despite their deficiencies in other aspects of their livelihood (Hall, 1992; Hinch & Higham, 2001). Some studies have posited that internally generated and motivated development strategies have been efficient and sustainable in the development of most rural communities in Nigeria (Eze, 1999; Abiona, 2009; Nwankwo & Agboeze, 2013; Danglah, 2013). Hence most communities have much reliance on such development initiatives instead of the long-awaited options from the public sector (Fong et al., 2014).

In addition, rural tourism is a form of tourism experience with focus on the features of a particular rural environment (Olawuyi & Raphael, 2018). It has much emphasis on the rural life experience including farm-based holidays, ecotourism, local sporting events, walking and climbing experiences, adventure and hunting experiences among others (Khartishvili, et al., 2019). However, rural tourism can be classified as a type of tourism experience within a rural area which involves the freewill movement of persons to this rural area to spend a night or more, to witness various categories of rural experience as stated above (Olawuyi & Raphael, 2018). Most of the rural areas in Africa are underdeveloped. Hence the search for opportunities for socioeconomic development to motivate rural living (Ntloko & Swart, 2008; Nwankwo & Agboeze, 2014).

However, this study contributes to the body of literature on the potentialities of local football events as regards sports tourism development in rural Nigeria. These studies were necessitated by the search to seek alternative means of improving the living standard of people living in rural parts of Nigeria. This will not only enhance income generation and distribution for the rural population, but equally discourage the ever-present rural-urban migration which poses lots of threats to urban infrastructure and sustainability as well as rural sustainability (Basse, 2013). As the most populous nation in Africa and 10th in the world, it has been an uphill task for the Nigerian government to introduce and sustain development schemes in over 5000 rural communities in the country. And this scenario has left most of these rural

populations below the poverty level, except for the few individuals who were able to migrate to the urban centres for greener pastures.

Moreover, some previous studies have noted that communities that develop from within always experience sustainable growth in their socioeconomic lifestyles (Eze, 1992, Abiona, 2009; Nwankwo & Agboeze, 2014). This has not only discouraged rural-urban migration but has also enhanced the transformation of most rural communities into urban and semi-urban centres (Abiona, 2009). Notable examples include Agulu, Nnobi, Ogidi, Nsukka, Ihiala, Udi and Nkpor communities among others in Southeast Nigeria. These communities have been transformed from rural to semi-urban and urban centres with a greater socio-economic structure that enhanced the standard of living.

It has been established that most rural communities in Nigeria engage in sporting events, more especially football competitions annually for both entertainment and unification purposes. In most cases, these football events are organized and sponsored by either the community or some affluent members of the community. Teams for these competitions are organized in line with the villages, quarters or kindreds of the participants as the case may be. Emanating from the western part of Nigeria, this activity dates back to the early 1960s. It is quite unfortunate that these sporting events have not been investigated to ascertain their potential for sports tourism development which will equally translate to sustainable community development in the rural areas. What then are the potentialities of December football competitions with respect to sports tourism development in rural Nigeria? However, this study investigated this fact with a special focus on the communities' perception of the events, homecoming as a result of the event, impacts of the event on the host communities, and safety issues arising from the events. This is believed would spur critical discussions on harnessing these yuletide/December football competitions for possible sports tourism development in the rural communities of Southeast Nigeria.

Methods and materials

Yaro Yemene's formula aided the sampling of 400 respondents (200 from each of the case studies) for the distribution of semi-structured questionnaires in the ten selected communities (five communities from each of the case studies and forty questionnaires for each of the selected ten communities). Also, a random sampling approach was used, taking cognizance of low, average and high-income earners, to provide a broad representation of the respondents. In addition, cluster and purposive sampling techniques were further used to select forty key informants for the study (four from each of the ten communities). These sources were further assisted by detailed field observations and relevant documentary sources. Chi Square and descriptive statistics were utilized for the analysis of collated data from the field. Five rural communities with the history of such events were conveniently sampled from each of the case studies in Southeast Nigeria. In the first case study (Ikwuato LGA of Abia State), the following communities were sampled: Amuda, Mbala, Umuaku, Lomara and Umuelem. While in the second case study (Dunukofia LGA of Anambra State), the following communities were sampled: Ifitedunu, Umunnachi, Ukpo, Umudioka and Ukwulu. See the maps of the two case studies from Southeast Nigeria below.

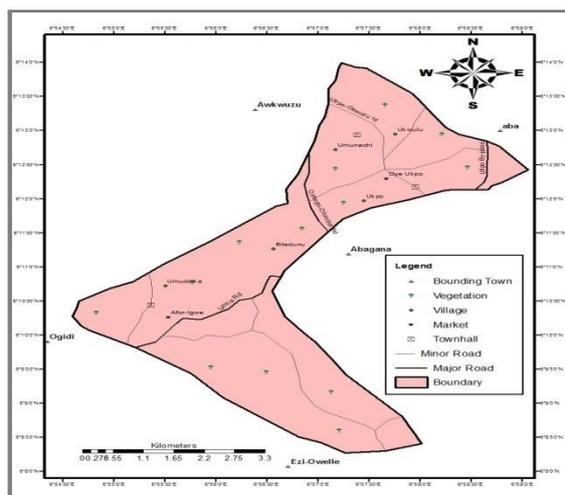


Figure 1: Map of Ikwuato Local Government Area, Abia State, showing sampled communities (Source: Modified Google Map, 2016)

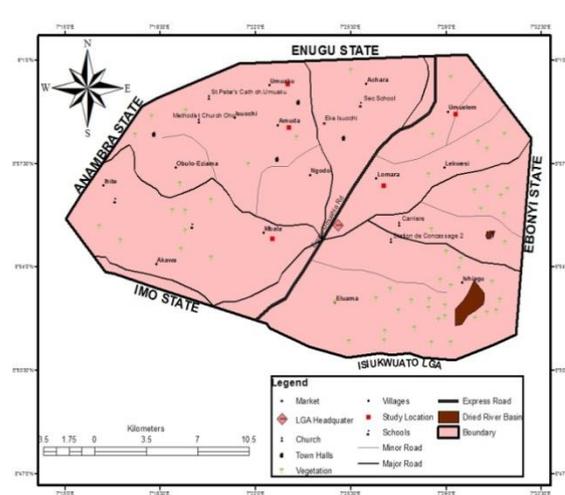


Figure 2: Map of Dunukofia Local Government Area, Anambra State, showing sampled communities (Source: Modified Google Map, 2016)

A brief survey of related literature

Fun et al. (2011) in their study on the role of sports tourism in community development note that sports tourism promotes job and income generation and distribution, in the host community. Also, Ntloko and Swart (2008) in their study on the impact of sports tourism concluded that sporting events have entertainment values and economic benefits for rural businesses, coupled with their tendencies to promote community pride and indigenous cultures. Imbaya and Irungu (2013) worked on the perceived impacts of sports tourism by members of the host community in Iten, Kenya. Their results reveal that economic benefits appear to have the greatest influence on whether members of the host community support further sports tourism development. They concluded by stating that accruing economic benefits motivate members of the host community to support sports tourism development in their area.

Moreover, Marumo, et al., (2015) studied sports tourism as a development initiative in the economy of Mafikeng. They concluded that regular hosting of sports events in the area would improve the hosts' economic activities. Also, Skinner, et al., (2008) worked on building social capital in disadvantaged communities. They concluded their study by noting that sports-based communities thrive better than some other communities that rely on external factors for community development initiatives. Yusuf (2016) investigated the tourism impacts of the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA) on the host community of Ile-Ife in 2014 and informed that the events had enormous economic gains for the host in diverse ramifications. He also went further to note that the government, organisers, sponsors, host community and the private sectors played a collective role in that regard.

More so, Dehnavi et al. (2012) noted that the major challenge to the harnessing of the gains of sports tourism in Tehran, Iran, was the failure of the relevant authorities to pay the required attention to public sports at different levels. They conclude that this attitude has cost the community the enormous gains of sporting events such as community development. In addition, Ngoka and Umeakuka (2013) identified sporting events as one of the instruments for sustainable development in most African communities, but decried poor infrastructural facilities, ailing economy, political instability and inadequate investment and concerns to sports development, as the banes of actualising the huge potentialities of sports events for community development in the rural areas. In his study on sports tourism as an instrument for Nigeria's

development in the 21st Century, Elendu (2013) noted that sports tourism has the capacity of impacting much on the Nigerian economy, but cited some challenges that should be managed to achieve this feat. Some of these challenges include insecurity, poor infrastructure and superstructure, as well as sports management deficiencies in Nigeria. Also, Kim, et al., (2015), and Nwankwo (2017) studied the perceived social impacts of hosting large-scale sports tourism events. They infer that the much perceived positive impact of sports events by the host is a major boost for the growth and sustainability of such events.

On rural development, Fun, et al., (2014) note that local communities' involvement relationship quality is fundamental for sustainable rural development. In support of this, Danglah (2010) opines that developing rural-based tourism which is host-driven, is a sustainable strategy for rural development in Nigeria. Hence the involvement of the host community is imperative for the sustainability of such projects. Nwankwo and Agboeze (2013) through their study on Bauchi, Nigeria, argue that tourism has potential to impact positively on income distribution and generation amongst the rural population.

Finally, Basse (2013) and, Mansor and Mahin (2013) identified tourism as one of the instruments that attract investments in the rural areas and equally enhance rapid development. They went further to note that tourism activities in the rural areas promote income distribution and generation. Hence discourage unnecessary rural-urban migration. These are amongst the studies that motivated the current study to investigate the potentialities of sports tourism for community development in parts of Southeast Nigeria, with a special focus on the famous annual yuletide sporting events in rural communities of Southeast Nigeria.

Results

The results from the quantitative survey will be presented focusing on the four paradigms, which were also represented with the alphabets A-D (i.e., perception = A, arrival = B, impacts = C, and safety issues = D) used for the study. Results are presented from different case studies. Case 1 represents the first case study (Ikwaato LGA of Abia State). The following communities were sampled: Amuda, Mbala, Umuaku, Lomara, and Umuelem. While case 11 also represents the second case study (Dunukofia LGA of Anambra State), the following communities were sampled: Ifitedunu, Umunnachi, Ukpo, Umudioka, and Ukwulu. This will be followed by a discussion where data from qualitative sources will be considered as well.

Host perception of the event as positive or negative

In case 1, there was a positive perception of the event as most participants perceived the event to be either good (78.5%, $n = 157$) or fairly good (18%, $n = 36$). Few perceived the event as bad (1.10%, $n = 2$) or very bad (2.5%, $n = 5$). The relationship between village and event perception was not statistically significant; $\chi^2(12, 200) = 13.05$, $p = .365$. The positive perception of the event was equally distributed across all five villages. In case 11, there was also a positive perception of the event as most participants perceived the event to be either good (36.5%, $n = 73$) or fairly good (63.5%, $n = 127$). None perceived the event to be either bad or very bad. The village and perception of the event had a significant relationship, $\chi^2(4, 200) = 44.57$, $p < .001$. Participants in Ukpo had more positive perceptions of the event (15.0%, $n = 30$) than participants in the other communities, while Umunnachi had the highest percentage of participants (17.5%, $n = 35$) who perceived the event to be fairly good compared to participants in the other villages. Hence, the positive perception of the event was not equally distributed.

Promotion of the community identity by the event

In cases 1 and 11, a Chi-square test of independence was calculated, comparing perceptions of the competition as showcasing the host community in a positive light. According to the results

of Cases 1 and 11, the majority of participants indicated Yes (94.5%, n = 189), (98.5%, n = 197) and only a few indicated No (5.5%, n = 11), (1.5%, n = 3) in the option provided. A significant association was not found in both cases 1 and 11; $\chi^2(4, 200) = 3.27, p = .514$ and $\chi^2(4, 200) = 5.42, p = .73$). The majority of the participants in all the villages agreed that the competition showcases the host community in a positive light.

Host communities' overall rating for the sporting events

In case 1, many people rate the event as satisfactory (52.0%, n = 104) and perfect (30.0%, n = 60). Others were of the view that the event was fairly good (15.5%, n = 31) and not good (2.5%, n = 5) at all. A Chi-square test of independence was calculated for the rating of the competition. A significant association, which was between the village and the rating of the competition, was not found. $\chi^2(12, 200) = 13.90, p = .307$). The majority of the participants in all the villages in case 1 rated the football competition as perfect and satisfactory. In case 11, many people rate the event fairly good (62.0%, n = 124) and satisfactory (29.0%, n = 58), while others rating is perfect (8.5%, n = 17) and not good (0.5%, n = 1). A significant association which was between the village and the rating of the competition was found, $\chi^2(12, 200) = 54.71, p < .001$). Ukwulu village has the highest number of participants (17.0%, n = 34) who rated the football competition as fairly good compared to participants from the other communities.

Arrivals as a result of the competition

Arrival was another paradigm that was investigated to ascertain the potential of the annual football events for sports tourism development in the rural areas. This paradigm tends to find the rate of arrival during this event. Here, the study intends to determine the capability of the event to attract people who live in the cities to these communities. A Chi-square test of independence was calculated for the attraction of visitors from other communities to the event. In cases 1 and 11, a significant association was not found between the village and the attraction of visitors from other villages by the competition; $\chi^2(4, 200) = 9.28, p = .055$ and $\chi^2(4, 200) = 5.42, p = .247$). Thus, the majority of the participants in all the villages believe that the competition attracts visitors from other villages, since most of the participants answered yes (97.0%, n = 194), (98.5%, n = 197) rather than no (3.0%, n = 6), (1.5%, n = 3) in cases 1 and 11.

Members' of the host communities' interest in participating in the competition

A Chi-square test of independence was calculated for those interested in participating in the competition. 47.0%, n = 94 responses were no, while 53.0%, n = 106, were Yes from the host communities. A significant association was not found between the village and having an interest in participating in the competition, $\chi^2(4, 200) = 6.91, p = .141$). Participants in all the communities in case 1 equally had an interest in participating in the competition. In case 11, a significant association was found between the village and having an interest in participating in the competition, $\chi^2(4, 200) = 53.44, p < .001$). The participants that answered "Yes" were 60.5% (n = 121) and 39.5% (n = 79) answered "No." Although participants from Umudioka (19.5%, n = 39) had more interest in participating in the competition than those from the other communities.

Statistics of communities' population that come home for the event

Here, the three options used were A = 1-20%, B = 20% and above, and C = 50% and above. A Chi-square test of independence was calculated for the number of each community's population that came home for the event. In case 1, a significant association was not found

between the village and the number of each community's population that came home for the competition $\chi^2(8, 200) = 20.46, p = .06$). Participants from all the communities equally come home for the event. In their response, category A has 6.5%, $n = 13$, B is 26.0%, $n = 52$, and then C has 67.5%, $n = 135$ participants, respectively. In case 11, a significant association was found between the village and the number of each town's population that came home for the competition, $\chi^2(8, 200) = 56.28, p < .001$). Category A has 1.5%, $n = 3$, B has 38.5%, $n = 77$, and C has 60.0%, $n = 120$ participants. Apart from the participants from Umudioka (18.0%, $n = 36$), who mostly come home for the competition, others also visit home for the event.

Impacts of the events on the host communities

A Chi-square test of independence was calculated to determine whether the football competition would increase entertainment opportunities for visitors and residents. A significant association was not found between the village and whether the competition would increase entertainment opportunities for visitors and residents in cases 1 and 11; $\chi^2(4, 200) = 8.29, p = .082$ and $\chi^2(4, 200) = 5.42, p = .247$). Most of the participants responded yes (90.0%, $n = 181$), (99.0%, $n = 198$) rather than no (9.5%, $n = 19$), (1.0%, $n = 2$) in both cases. Participants from all the communities agreed that the football competition would increase entertainment opportunities for visitors and residents.

The tendencies of the football competition to promote development and maintenance of public utilities

This was represented by using tables to showcase the percentage of responses and the number of participants.

Case 1

Table 1: Results for whether the football competition will promote development and maintenance of public utilities.

	Amuda	Mbala	Umuaku	Lomara	Umuelem	Total
No	1(0.5%)	7(3.5%)	2(1.0%)	1(0.5%)	8(4.0%)	19(9.5%)
Yes	39(19.5%)	33(16.5%)	38(19.0%)	39(19.5%)	32(16.0%)	181(90.0%)
Subtotal, %	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	100%

A Chi-square test of independence was calculated to determine whether the football competition would promote the development and maintenance of public utilities. A significant association was found between the village and whether the football competition would promote the development and maintenance of public utilities, $\chi^2(4, 200) = 13.61, p < .01$). Amuda and Lomara had the highest number of participants who believed that the football competition would promote the development and maintenance of public utilities, while Umuelem had the least.

Case 11

Table 2: Results for whether the football competition will promote development and maintenance of public utilities.

	Ifitedunu	Umunnachi	Ukpo	Umudioka	Ukwulu	Total
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No	2(1.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.5%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3(1.5%)
Yes	38(19.0%)	40(20.0%)	39(19.5%)	40(20.0%)	40(20.0%)	197(98.5%)
Subtotal, %	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	100%

A Chi-square test of independence was calculated to determine whether the football competition would promote the development and maintenance of public utilities. A significant association was not found between the village and whether the football competition would promote the development and maintenance of public utilities, $\chi^2(4, 200) = 5.42, p = .247$. Participants from all the villages agreed that the football competition would promote the development and maintenance of public utilities.

Impact on the communities' cultural identity

A Chi-square test of independence was calculated to determine whether the football competition would establish the community's cultural identity. In case 1, a significant association was found between the village and whether the football competition would establish the community's cultural identity $\chi^2(4, 200) = 14.02, p < .01$. The participants that answered "yes" were (82.0%, n = 164), while 18.0%, n = 36, answered "no". However, Amuda has the highest number of participants (19.0%, n = 38) who agreed that the football competition will establish the community's cultural identity, while Mbala ranked the least (13.0%, n = 26). In case 11, a significant association was not found between the village and whether the football competition would establish the community's cultural identity $\chi^2(4, 200) = 2.03, p = .730$. The percentage that said "yes" is 98.5%, n = 197, and 1.5%, n = 3, said "no." Therefore, participants from all the villages agreed that the football competition would establish the community's cultural identity.

Safety issues associated with the events

Safety issues were the last paradigm that was investigated during the study. The investigation here was aimed at answering the question, "What are the safety issues that are peculiar to this football event?" This is expedient since safety considerations are among the initial considerations of a tourist before embarking on a given tourist experience (Obieluem et al., 2016). The quantitative results are presented in the two tables below.

Table 3: Results of Chi-square Test on whether there are safety measures provided for the competition.

	Amuda	Mbala	Umuaku	Lomara	Umuelem	Total
No	1(0.5%)	3(1.5%)	6(3.0%)	0(0.0%)	4(2.0%)	14(7.0%)
Yes	39(19.5%)	37(18.5%)	34(17.0%)	40(20.0%)	36(18.0%)	186(93.0%)
Subtotal, %	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	100%

A Chi-square test of independence was calculated to determine whether there are safety measures provided for the players, the football competition arena, and the spectators. A significant association was not found between the village and whether there were safety measures provided for the players, the football competition arena, and the spectators, $\chi^2(4, 200) = 8.76, p = .068$. Participants from all the villages agreed that there were safety measures provided for the players, the football competition arena, and the spectators.

Table 4: Provision of safety measures for players and spectators during the events

	Ifitedunu	Umunachi	Ukpo	Umudioka	Ukwulu	Total
No	0(0%)	0(0.0%)	4(2.0%)	2(1.0%)	2(1.0%)	8(4.0%)
Yes	40(20.0%)	40(20.0%)	36(18.0%)	38(19.0%)	38(19.0%)	192(96.0%)

Subtotal, %	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	100%
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A Chi-square test of independence was calculated to determine whether there are safety measures provided for the players, at the venue, and for the spectators. A significant association was not found between the village and whether there were safety measures provided for the players, the football competition arena, and the spectators, $\chi^2(4, 200) = 7.29, p = .121$. Participants from all the villages agreed that there were safety measures provided for the players, at the venue, and for the spectators.

Cases of fights and injuries during the competition

A Chi-square test of independence was calculated to determine whether there had been cases of fights and injuries during the competition. In Case 1, a significant association was found between the village and whether there had been cases of fights and injuries during the competition, $\chi^2(4, 200) = 11.59, p = .021$. Most participants answered "Yes" (68.5%, $n = 138$), while 31.0%, $n = 62$, answered "No." However, participants from Umuaku (16.5%, $n = 33$) and Lomara (16.5%, $n = 33$) agreed that there had been cases of fights and injuries during the competition, while Amuda (11.5%, $n = 23$) had the least record of such incidents. In Case 11, a significant association was not found between the village and whether there had been cases of fights and injuries during the competition, $\chi^2(4, 200) = 8.64, p = .071$, as the participants that answered "Yes" were 11.5%, $n = 23$, and the participants that answered "No" were 88.5%, $n = 176$. Most participants from all the villages agreed that there had been no cases of fights and injuries during the competition, except for the normal injuries sustained by players during games.

A Chi-square test of independence was calculated to determine whether there had been cases of death during the competition. In cases 1 & 11, a significant association was not found between the village and whether there had been cases of death during the competition; $\chi^2(4, 200) = 4.12, p = .390$ and $\chi^2(4, 200) = 3.57, p = .467$. The participants that answered "Yes" were (3.0%, $n = 6$), (2.0%, $n = 4$) and the participants that answered "No" were (97.0%, $n = 194$), (98.0%, $n = 196$). In this sense, the vast majority of competitors from all villages believed that no deaths occurred during the competition.

Discussion

The first paradigm, perception, was used to understand the communities' perceptions of the event. The majority of the community believes that the sporting event is entertaining and has potential for rural development through tourism. Many of these communities perceive the yuletide sporting event as a vehicle for the promotion of their communities' identity, and the event has high ratings among members of the host communities. This is an indication that sports tourism development would thrive in the area of promoting community development. This was also noted by Ngoka and Umeakuka (2013) and Atuk (2014) when they asserted that a positive perception of development initiatives in the rural areas by the host would support the sustainability of such projects in their areas. Also, in a more recent study, Boonsiritomachai and Phonthanukitihaworn (2019) are of the view that residents' participation influences their perception of tourism impacts. This motivates further support for tourism development in the area. Hence, this perception may not be unconnected with the perceived economic impacts of the events; "economic benefits appear to have the greatest influence on whether the local residents support tourism development" (Imbaya & Irungu, 2013: 78). This view was equally supported by Ntloko and Swart (2008). However, from these pieces of evidence, it can be deduced that these host communities perceive the event as a good development for the purposes of attraction, entertainment, unity, and love among members of these communities. More so,

Nyikana (2016) notes that sports tourism has the potential to contribute to the development of rural areas if strategically and sustainably managed. Therefore, local areas need to leverage this opportunity for rural development in the long run. This explains why most members of the studied community see inclusive responsibility as strategic in maximizing the gains of sports tourism for rural development.

Moreover, the second paradigm (arrivals) was used to investigate the rate of arrival as a result of this sporting event. The opinions of the participants reveal that the event has the potential to attract people even from outside the host communities. Also, most of these communities have an interest in participating in the event, which contributes to a high rate of homecoming during the competition. In addition, a good number of members of these communities who reside outside of these communities are motivated by these sporting events to travel to their ancestral communities. During the interview, it was gathered that each of these rural communities usually has an average of five thousand five hundred returnees during the yuletide as a result of the sporting event. Findings from the two research methods show that a greater percentage of members of the host communities come home for this event, either to participate, get involved in the organization, entertain or be entertained, or engage in economic activities within the vicinity of the event. The implication is that this yuletide football competition has the potential to attract visitors to the host communities during the period of the event. Herbold et al. (2020) and Chavan (2020) in their separate studies note that a well organized local sporting event with a focus on the community's areas of comparative advantage in sports generates greater arrivals to the host community during the sporting event. This traffic translates to better economic opportunities in the host community. As noted by Kurtzman and Zauhar (2003), this is another major boost for sports tourism development in a given area.

Moreover, impact is another paradigm that was investigated. The findings show that a greater percentage of the sampled communities believe that the event increases entertainment opportunities for them and their visitors. It contributes to the development and maintenance of public utilities in those communities (see Tables 1 & 2), as well as significantly contributes to the preservation and promotion of the cultural identity of these communities. Hence, some aspects of the people's culture are displayed during the event. This was also affirmed during key informant interviews and observations. The event has the potential to boost income generation and distribution for members of these communities (Gibson et al., 1998). Social amenities, among others, can be attracted through this event to promote sustainable livelihood among members of these communities and equally motivate their commitments to the event (see Ritchie, 2010; Buhalis, 2000). It was also gathered that the event promotes the cultural identity of the host. Based on this, it can be concluded that the event has great socio-cultural and socio-economic impacts, which have been identified as among the indispensable keys to rural development in Nigeria and some other developing nations (Sinclair, 1998; Skinner, et al., 2008). In addition, Abujamous et al. (2019), in their study on the local community of Aquaba in South Jordan, note that the potential of sports tourism in the community needs to be harnessed to boost the local economy, with an emphasis on those sporting events that have a comparative advantage over neighbouring communities. This has a more direct impact on the economy of the host community.

The last paradigm was safety issues that are associated with the event. Hence, safety considerations contribute to the sustainability of any tourism project (Obieluem et al., 2016). For instance, Wanyonyi et al. (2021) identified insecurity, among other factors like policy issues and poor planning, as among the major challenges of local sports tourism development in the rural areas. This was among the major motivations for investigating this particular paradigm. Evidence from Tables 3 and 4 reveals that there are available safety measures designed to check safety threats during the event, and this may have contributed to the few

cases of quarrels and casualties witnessed during the event. Also, there are no cases of deaths during the competition. These three aspects of the safety paradigm were also viewed from key informant interviews and observational points of view. There is also agreement with information from the quantitative survey. However, safety considerations are among the priorities in tourism development if the gains of the project are to be maximized (Obieluem et al., 2016). Among the safety measures that were adopted by these communities include the use of police patrol, stand-by hospitals in case of emergency, thorough clearing of the environment to dislodge possible animal attacks, provision of first aid kits, use of community vigilantes, and pre-event orientation programmes, among others. It is imperative to note that "safety and security of lives and properties are needed to encourage tourism, including sports tourism" (Elendu, 2013: 146).

In a recent study, Al-Makhadmah et al. (2021) note that the availability of relevant and adequate tourism infrastructure, other responsive social amenities, and expertise involvement will mitigate the challenges of safety and other fears of tourists and visitors to local sports tourism activities. Interestingly, the cumulative result of the study revealed that most of these communities employed possible safety measures to control possible safety threats during the football competition. This implies that the sporting event has a reasonable safety guarantee for the host, participants, visitors, and organizers. This could be another motivation for possible sports tourism development in the rural areas.

Conclusion

The results of the study show that there is a positive perception of the event among the members of the host communities and that the event witnessed a high turnout of people, both from within and outside the host communities. Also, that the event has reasonable socio-economic and entertaining impacts coupled with a moderate safety guarantee for participants, organisers, visitors, the host community, and social facilities (see also Mazurek, 2014). This is a clear indication that this football event has the potential for sports tourism development in the rural areas. It would enhance meaningful, sustainable community development in the rural areas of Nigeria (Ngoka & Umeakuka, 2013; Mansour & Mahin, 2013). This concept can be further strengthened by utilizing the rich heritage treasures that these communities possess in order to increase their potential for sports tourism development.

There is also the need for adequate sponsorship and publicity for the event. For instance, adequate sponsorship would enable the organisers to have enough resources for necessary activities that pertain to the event. Also, adequate publicity increases the number of visitors to these communities during the event. Sports tourism development can serve as a development option for rural communities in Nigeria if harnessed through the development of various local sporting events in Nigerian rural communities. This study has revealed that the annual December football competitions in some rural communities in Nigeria have the potential for sustainable sports tourism development. The Destination Competition Tourism Model (DCTM), which enables developing tourist destinations to withstand the pressures arising from tourism development schemes and practices in a given area (Mazurek, 2014), would equip the organisers of these events to not only withstand the resulting challenges but also incorporate other social events during the opening and closing ceremonies to boost the number of spectators and income generation.

Ali (2010) also added that necessary caution and ethics should be taken into consideration by the organisers to enhance the sustainability of the project. It is worth noting that, in addition to promoting local entrepreneurship, the events will also promote cultural identity and boost infrastructural provision and maintenance in rural areas (see also Standeven & De Knop, 1999; Urmilla & Potgeiter, 2013). sporting event has both socio-cultural, socio-

economic and entertainment values for these rural communities and their visitors (Turco et al., 2002).

More so, community involvement and stakeholder participation need to be encouraged to pave the way for responsive community development in these communities through local sports tourism development. In their study on the World Junior Alpine Ski Championship in 2019, for example, Bazzanella et al. (2019) assert that the roles of major stakeholders are critical in ensuring the overall success of small-scale tourism events in rural areas. They also infer that mapped out strategies should be designed within the stakeholders' perceptions by the event managers or organizers to achieve a responsive impact of these local events on the local economy (Bazzanella et al., 2019). Similarly, Nyikana (2016) and Boonsiritomachai and Phonthanukitihaworn (2019) also shared the same view when they inferred that local involvement, support, and active participation are among the key factors for responsible community development through local sports tourism.

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