

Memorable Sporting Event Experiences in a Resource-Scarce Context: The Case of Cameroon and the Africa Cup of Nations

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Abstract

This paper unpacks memorable sporting experiences associated with international events hosted in a resource-scarce context. In this respect, the study examines the experiences associated with the hosting of the 2022 Africa Cup of Nations in Cameroon. Based on empirical data from n=388 event attendees, supplemented with n=8 key informant interviews, the study shows that by and large, the event is associated with positive and highly memorable experiences for the attendees particularly linked to the planning and organisation aspects of the event. However, issues relating to the scheduling of some games, the ease into, and out of the stadiums and the perceived low quality of food and beverage supplies inside the stadiums were of concern. In addition to this, key differences were observed between those who were vaccinated against Covid-19 and those who were not particularly around insecurities whilst at the stadium and precinct. While the paper draws parallels with existing research on memorable experiences and sporting events, it does reveal the added challenges to hosting these events in a resource-scarce context.

Keywords: sport tourism; Cameroon; AFCON; resource-scarcity; sporting events; Covid-19; sporting event experiences

Introduction

The last decade has seen notable growth in sports event tourism research, both in the developed and developing world contexts with many scholars examining the cause and effects, variously of the phenomenon as a global activity (Acha-Anyi, 2023; Bason, 2023; Kwiatkowski et al., 2017; Gibson et al., 2018; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2020, 2022; Jiang & Chen, 2019; Mousavi, et al., 2022; Tichaawa & Harilal, 2016). Such growth in popularity has been linked with the perceptible gains that can be obtained from regularly hosting and execution of such events (Getz & Page, 2016; Hinch & Ito, 2018; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2020). In recent years, many countries/destinations have embarked on an aggressive pursuit of staging sporting events with a view to fast-tracking socio-economic growth and development. This, as Hinch and Ito (2018) observe that such sporting events are a major contributor to national developmental prerogatives linked to regional development, destination competitiveness as well as upgrades in infrastructure and tourism facilities amongst other often-stated benefits. Elsewhere, Chiengkul et al. (2022) posit that events of this nature are considered as strategic tools for which additional revenue can be brought into destinations, and because of this, these events have become a key feature in destination management. As such, Kwiatkowski et al. (2017) argue that such sporting events have become a central and permanent part of the developmental

strategies employed by governments at all levels including cities, regions and countries globally.

Over the past decade, there has been growing recognition of the need to investigate, and better understand the lived experiences of sports tourists, especially those who participate in organised, competitive events (Gibson et al., 2018; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c). As stressed by Kwiatkowski et al. (2017), a thorough investigation is needed into the profiles, characteristics and experiences of event attendees and participants, as a means of gaining insights for economic and marketing reasons and future planning purposes. The importance of understanding event experiences lies in the fact that generally, memorable tourism experience research has been conducted in a geographically skewed and biased trend, with most studies being in the developed, well-resourced Global North (Hosany, Sthapit & Björk, 2022). Others have suggested that such research has focused on tourists who travel very long distances for once-off mega-events such as the FIFA World Cup or the Olympic Games, with much research focusing on the impacts and long-term viability of organising such events in many instances (Bason, 2023; Kwiatkowski et al., 2017).

The above shows that there has been sparse research conducted on the important aspects of events linked to experiences, particularly the memorable experiences of those who attend these events. Moreover, events hosted in the Global South, in economies that are classified as having resource limitations have been largely neglected in the scope of the existing research. In this study, we argue that the concept of memorable experiences in sport tourism in the African context is under-theorised in literature. It is this neglect that has been identified as a research opportunity for this study, where Africa's premier sporting event, the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) was identified for further research on memorable experiences. The event is hosted every two years by different countries on the continent and because of its characteristics as a major sporting event, many countries have enthusiastically sought to host the event (Acha-Anyi, 2023). Despite such enthusiasm, there has been little research conducted on the event, particularly on the experiences, positive or negative associated with its attendance. Thus, this study seeks to fill the existing research gap by providing an analysis of memorable event experiences at the event hosted in Cameroon in 2022, especially given the resource limitations observed in this context in recent times. Importantly, the contribution of this research lies in the fact that positive memorable event experiences post-event tend to trigger a revisit intention and a certain attachment towards the destination, and thus make a positive contribution to destination competitiveness (see Hosany et al., 2021). In terms of arrangement and structure, the first part of the paper presents the theoretical framework and literature review, followed by a description of the research methodology applied to the study. Next, the findings from the data collection are presented, followed by the policy-related and practical implications of the research in the conclusion.

Literature review

Resource-scarcity theory

This study is grounded on the concept of resource-scarcity, contextualized into the hosting of a major sporting event, using Cameroon as a case study. The resource scarcity theory is one that emerged from the strategic management field but has recently been integrated into other scholarly works as well including the domain of tourism management and development (Utami & Alamanos, 2022; Omondi-Ochieng, 2019). In its essence, it is a theory that predicts and outlines the fundamental resources required for performance and to achieve competitive advantage (Utami & Alamanos, 2022). Barney (1991:101) defined resources as “all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc. controlled by a firm that enables the firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its

efficiency and effectiveness”. In the context of tourism, the concept would thus be concerned with the ability of a destination to optimally arrange its resources to gain a competitive advantage. However, many countries with a developing world nature tend to be constrained where resources are concerned and thus unable to attain their optimum potential for the sector and its contribution.

Most countries in the Global South have recession-stricken economies and they are increasingly using special events particularly those linked to sport, to boost their local economies (Hemmonsby & Tichaawa, 2020; Nyikana, 2019). In the context of this study, and in line with the resource scarcity theory, we argue that the majority of developing and underdeveloped countries in the Global South lack the resources to regularly compete for, and host mega and major sporting events. In the event that the countries can host major sporting events regularly, the lack of financial, human, and other resources at the destination may affect the overall experience of attendees. As Omondi-Ochieng (2019) observes, resources in the context of sport tourism can include financial resources (funding), facilities (stadiums and training equipment), and event marketing resources among others. They argue that the strategic and efficient use of such resources may create a successful sporting event, resulting in positive experiences associated with that event, and to a degree the host destination. Using Cameroon’s hosting of the 2022 AFCON competition, this study argues that the country and its challenges with some resources when compared to other hosts had an opportunity to create a memorable event experience for attendees, and thus influence the future management of the event in other similar economies in the continent. Besides, Kimbu (2012) as well as Kimbu and Tichaawa (2018) have examined the challenges that impede the sustainable development of tourism in Cameroon and have noted the structural issues including funding and implementation of plans and policies as main challenges.

Initially, Cameroon was supposed to host the 2019 edition of the championships (Ekonde, 2021). However, there were delays in infrastructural development of the desired levels for the competition, particularly stadium infrastructure which meant that the 2019 edition was organized in Egypt. Major funding was required for the construction of stadiums and roads as well as training facilities for the participating teams which posed a challenge for Cameroon in sourcing the funds. Ekonde (2021) though observes that such delays in infrastructure were linked to the fact that initially, there were 16 teams earmarked for that 2019 tournament, which Cameroon would have been able to host. However, the Confederation of African Football (CAF) later increased this number to 24, which complicated matters for, as much as the country was confident in accommodating all the 24 teams, there were sceptics about this, resulting in the tournament being stages elsewhere, while Cameroon was awarded the 2021 edition. The 2021 edition was going to be hosted from June to July of that year, but this too had to be changed owing to unfavourable climatic conditions (Ekonde, 2021). The event was eventually hosted between January and February of 2022 in the country and was seen as a success by many observers (Acha-Anyi, 2023). In the next subsection, we present a brief discussion on the kinds of experiences that may result in repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth from attendees and thus, form part of memorable event experiences.

Sporting event experiences

There is growing literature that focuses on memorable tourism experiences as well as sport tourism experiences (Cheiengkul et al., 2022; Hemmonsby & Tichaawa, 2020; Sterchele, 2020). Kim and So (2022) assert that experiences are a significant component of the tourism industry and its activities. This is because of the intangible nature of the sector where there is no physical evidence that a service was consumed, thus experiences become an essential aspect of tourism. The concept of a memorable tourism experience has been defined as a “tourism

experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred” (see Kim et al., 2012:13). Work by Cheiengkul et al. (2022) proposed an assumption that a memorable experience has a positive impact on the overall well-being of special event attendees such as sports tourists. The reason for this is that several factors contribute to positive sporting event experiences such as the sporting event itself, the scenic destination, the host community, sports facilities, and the recreational activities among others.

Cameroon and the Africa Cup of Nations

The 2022 AFCON was hosted in Cameroon in the major host cities of Douala, Bafoussam, Garoua, Limbe, and Yaoundé. Cameroon is a country situated in Central Africa with an abundance of natural and cultural resources that have contributed to the growth of the tourism industry (Kimbu, 2012; Tata & Lambi, 2014; Tichaawa, 2017; 2021; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018b). According to the World Bank (2022), Cameroon has one of the largest economies in Central Africa with various sectors including tourism contributing to the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) valued at US\$42 billion. In addition, the country’s economy is expected to further grow by 4.4% in 2023 (World Bank, 2022). Such statistics highlight the socio-economic development potential of the country.

The sports tourism sector in Cameroon has experienced notable popularity and growth in the past decade, subsequently making noticeable contributions to the socioeconomic growth trajectory of the country (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2022; Nyikana, 2019). The country has hosted several well-known sporting events such as the AFCON Women’s League, and Mount Cameroon Race of Hope which is one of Africa’s iconic sporting events among others (Nsongan, 2019). Acha-Anyi (2023) claims that the steady growth of the country’s economy and social development is one of the reasons it hosted the 2022 AFCON. This is coupled with the fact that the country had previously hosted AFCON Women’s major event in 2016 thus making it an ideal destination to host the AFCON 2022 event. The major event was expected to enhance the socio-economic growth of Cameroon through infrastructural development in host cities, an increase in income injection as well as the increase in investments (Acha-Anyi, 2023; Dibie, 2019). Despite the above, the hosting of the 2022 competition was not without certain complications.

Historically, the country had only hosted the tournament once before (1972), wherein it was heralded for having contributed to infrastructural development (two stadiums were built for the event). Ekonde (2021) argues that those two stadiums were the only ones of international standard in the country for a long time until the recent construction projects around the country linked to the 2022 AFCON competition. Besides just the facilities and infrastructure, the tournament was also earmarked to make key contributions to the strengthening of the local competitiveness in sport and tourism and more importantly, as a vehicle through which a divided nation could be somewhat healed through the unifying ability of sporting events (Ekonde, 2021). This background provides the context for Cameroon being an ideal case study for this research study. Ultimately, the country spent large sums of money in staging the tournament, with many observers and critics raising serious concerns linked to this spending when the country has so many problems and limited resources (Ekonde, 2021). The next section provides a description of, and justification for the methods employed in carrying out this research.

Methods

This study was conducted in Cameroon during the 2022 Africa Cup of Nations with data collected on four of the five host cities (i.e. Yaoundé, Douala, Bafoussam and Limbe). Drawing from a mixed-method research paradigm, the study employed both qualitative and quantitative

data collection techniques. In this regard, data was collected from event attendees at the four host cities for the duration of the event (n=388), the percentages of distribution per host city are shown in Table 1 below. The data was collected on match days by trained fieldworkers together with the researchers.

Table 1: Host city

Host City	Total in %
Bafoussam	26.5
Douala	22.2
Limbe	25.8
Yaoundé	25.5

A questionnaire survey was used to randomly target event attendees at the stadium precincts. The survey was designed cognizant of extant literature on tourism and event experiences, in addition to considering the local Cameroonian context. The key variables examined were linked to stadium design, ease of getting into the stadiums, obtaining tickets, journey to the stadium, quality of facilities within the stadium, temperature in the stadium, food and Covid-19 protocol since the event was hosted at the time of the pandemic. In addition, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected key informants (n=8) involved in the organization of the event. These informants who were purposively selected included governments officials in tourism and sport; representatives of the local organizing committee and local sponsors. The quantitative data for the study was analysed through the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences software. Simple descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, means and standard deviation tests were conducted for the analysis of the responses. The qualitative data from the interviews were thematically analysed, with key themes emerging from this set integrated into the quantitative analysis. The discussions are presented in the section that follows.

Results

Summary of demographic profiles of respondents

Table 2 below summarises the key socio-demographic profiles of those that were surveyed for this study.

Table 2: Demographic profiles

Age	Percentage
18-25 years	26.2
26-35 years	35.1
36-45 years	20.3
46-55 years	13.2
56-65 years	3.9
66 years and above	1.3
Gender	
Male	63.9
Female	36.1
Nationality	
Cameroon	82.7
Gambia	8.0
Tunisia	4.1
Chad	1.3
Guinea	1.3
Zimbabwe	0.8
Germany	0.3
Cape Verde	0.3
Democratic Republic of Congo	0.3
Ethiopia	0.3
Gabon	0.3
Senegal	0.3
Mode of transport during the tournament	
By public bus/shuttle bus	35.5
By personal car	28.2
By taxi	20.5
By motorbike	14.0
By foot/walking	1.8

The key findings of the study revealed that for the most part, the respondents were relatively young, with most falling between the age range of 18 years and 35 years of age (61.3%) and mostly male (63.9%). Expectedly, an overwhelming majority of them (82.7%) were Cameroonian nationals although there were many smaller numbers from different regional countries present. This was however dominated by attendees of participating countries/teams in the tournament as expected. In terms of their travel to the stadium venues for the duration of the tournament, many preferred to use public busses or shuttle services (35.5%), personal private cars (28.2%) or make use of local taxis (20.5%).

Rating of AFCON experiences

Overall rating of the 2022 AFCON

In an attempt to gauge the overall experiences that the respondents associated with the AFCON event in Cameroon, three (3) general statements were provided on a Likert-scale measurement. The scale ranged from 1 to 10, where 1 was “I did not enjoy at all” and 10 was “I totally enjoyed it”. The respondents were then asked to respond to the three statements based on their experiences during the event. The first statement given related to their overall enjoyment of the event, where the sentiments were largely positive, with a mean of 7.78 obtained with a standard deviation of 2.039. These positive sentiments were also observed when the notion of the likelihood to attend another match during the tournament was raised, with a mean of 7.43 and a standard deviation of 2.186 being noted. Finally, the question of the likelihood to attend the next AFCON tournament in the Ivory Coast (in 2024) was asked, and although to a lesser extent, positive expressions were provided with a mean of 5.20 and a standard deviation of 2.949 being observed. From these three broader ratings of experiences, a more focused section on the key experiences with different aspects of the event was sought. In this regard, the most important aspects of the management of the event were explored, to identify those experiences that would be regarded as memorable to the attendees.

Memorable experiences at the 2022 AFCON in Cameroon

Table 3 below illustrates the memorable experiences associated with the 2022 AFCON tournament. The experiences were based on certain aspects that have been identified in the existing literature as having the ability to create lasting impressions with attendees. To gain a clearer picture of these aspects, a 5-point Likert-scale measurement was used ranging from “very poor” to “very good”. In order to ensure a better presentation of the findings in this regard, the items “very poor” and “poor” as well as “good” and “very good” have been combined in the presentation of the discussion. In this way, only two categories are used as either being “poor” or “good” respectively. Generally, the findings were largely positive, with many of the aspects measured yielding positive sentiments from the respondents. For example, a majority of the respondents (62.4%) were satisfied with their experiences in obtaining tickets for the games. Equally, they were very satisfied with the journey to the stadium (70%), a result that is expected when considering the festive nature of event days and the euphoria that accompanies football matches in a football-crazy nation like Cameroon (see Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2020).

With regards to the ease of getting in and out of the stadiums, over half of the respondents (56.9%) were satisfied, whilst nuances were noted with those who either rated this experience as poor (23.2%) or were not sure (20%). During fieldwork observations, it was noted that many of the event attendees tended to spend a great deal of time in and around the stadium particularly in the local bars and eateries, enjoying food, beverages and sporting debates about the teams competing on the day. As such, they tended to only start getting into

the actual venue at the last minute, in a hurry, which may account for the poor rating of this experience. Regarding the experiences with the signage to get to, and move around within the stadium, the respondents were largely satisfied (68.1%). The interesting thing with this finding on signage is that in the interviews, there were some suggestions that this was not the strongest aspect in some of the stadiums. As narrated by an official who is involved in sports and sponsorship:

In many countries, stadium development is done with also consideration of the local infrastructure. For example, I was in Cape Town [South Africa] when they were building the world cup stadium, and you could see signs everywhere going to the stadium. Here, the stadium is world-class, but drive 5 minutes away from the stadium and you wouldn't be sure if you are still in the same place. There are no signs and the roads change so suddenly.

The suggestion from the above response was that the pressure to host the event was accompanied by rushed construction of the stadium to meet the requirements of the event owner, and not necessarily built on the general infrastructural needs of the local area, and as such signage tended to not be an immediate focus.

The next two experiences were concerned with the stadium design as well as the quality of facilities within the stadium, which both received positive ratings of 77.1% and 73.7% respectively. Such positivity with the stadium features was something mirrored in the interviews with the key informants who felt that the money injected into building world-class facilities and stadia would result in positive experiences going forward. They suggested that the aim was always to ensure that world-class facilities are developed, which in turn would improve the standard of sport in the country whilst equally giving the fans an experience “out of this world”. As one government official involved in sport development opined:

The development of international standard stadiums in Cameroon means that our fans get world-class facilities and services. We want to bring international standards to the local level of Cameroon for our fans to enhance their sporting experiences. They love football, religiously, so why not bring top experiences for them?

Interestingly, there were notably negative experiences with the temperatures inside the stadium (31.2%), despite over half of the attendees (54.5%) not having an issue with this. The unhappiness with the experience of temperatures could be linked to what the key informants argued was a lack of consideration on the part of the organisers. In this regard, they argued that some games, on very hot days could have been scheduled for much later on in the evening when temperatures were cooler instead of midday when temperatures were at their peak. Despite this, the match experience as a whole and the atmosphere inside the match venue were ranked as a very positive experience (75.7%). In conversations with the key informants, this item was seen as a strategic aspect to get correct as they felt that it would have bigger impacts than just satisfying the attendees. They argued that the many people who watched the event would be drawn to the event in future because of what they observed on TV irrespective of where it is hosted, and they may even be drawn to the host cities because of this experience. A tourism official was enthusiastic and had this to say:

The match experience, the vibe that our fans create, and the colourful atmosphere that African supporters create with their cultural garments and sound can attract global

audiences. This will inspire international tourists to come to African countries to experience our unique celebration of sport and culture.

The next set of experiences was met with mixed ratings amongst the attendees. For example, whilst many of them (48.2%) were happy with the queuing times to get drinks, and food, and to use toilets inside the stadium, many were not sure how they would rate this experience. Similarly, there were mixed experiences with the quality of food and beverages inside the stadium with 44.7% of the attendees being happy about this, while many (33.8%) were unsure how they would rate this. A notable percentage of them (21.6%) were not happy with the experience linked to the quality of the food and beverages in the stadium. To some degree, this could be explained through the observations of some of the key informants, with some suggesting that many of the attendees preferred to eat outside the stadium because there they could get freshly cooked, reasonably portioned food versus the little portions inside, which at times were expensive. The experience with the helpfulness of the staff in the venue and the volunteers was also rated positively generally, although there were notable nuances with those who were not sure (30.2%) and those who were not happy with their experience altogether (17.1%).

Finally, the experiences with the COVID-19 protocols at the stadiums were rated as good by a majority of the attendees (61.1%). This item related to their experience of the processes of sanitizing, checking temperature and verification of vaccination statuses as well as the results of tests taken. Interestingly, when this is read in line with the proportion of vaccinations, some key observations are noted. From those surveyed, a majority of the attendees (60.5%) indicated that they were fully vaccinated for the COVID-19 pandemic versus those who had not been (39.5%). The interesting aspect of this is that the tournament was hosted on the expectation and requirement that all attendees had to have been vaccinated for the pandemic, and thus to have such notable numbers at the event spaces indicating that they had not been vaccinated was interesting. This would go some way in explaining the number of attendees (16.2%) who were not happy with the experiences of the COVID-19 protocols in the stadiums. The findings in this regard are supported by media reports in the lead up to the events which suggest that despite the Confederation of African Football's (CAF) requirement of negative PCR test and vaccination against the Covid-19 virus, few people in Cameroon wore masks and only 2.4 percent of the population had been vaccinated in the country at the time (News24, 2022).

Table 3: Experiences with the event

<i>Item</i>	<i>Very poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very good</i>
The information provided about the tournament	11.7	6.0	17.9	33.2	31.3
The process of obtaining game tickets	8.5	12.4	16.6	36.0	26.4
The journey to the stadium	4.9	9.8	15.3	36.3	33.7
The ease of getting into and out of the stadium	10.0	13.2	20.0	27.4	29.5
Signage to and around the stadium	5.7	7.6	18.5	34.2	33.9
The stadium design	1.8	4.7	16.3	37.9	39.2
The quality of facilities in the stadium	2.1	5.5	18.8	34.9	38.8
The temperature inside the stadium	18.5	12.7	14.3	24.9	29.6
The match experience and atmosphere	3.1	4.4	16.8	36.3	39.4
The queuing time for things inside the stadium (e.g. toilets, buying food and drinks etc.)	4.9	12.1	34.8	27.1	21.1
The quality of food and beverages	9.1	12.5	33.8	25.5	19.2
The helpfulness of venue staff and volunteers	7.0	11.1	30.2	31.5	20.2
Covid-19 protocols (i.e. sanitizing and checking of covid tests)	5.9	10.3	22.7	26.8	34.3

The experiences observed above were generally positive, and bode well for the future of both the event in other destinations, and the image of Cameroon linked to the successful hosting of the 2022 event. As noted by key informants, it was very crucial for the country to ensure that the event left lasting memories and positive experiences on those who attended and those who watched on TV as exemplified by the following two quotes:

If we get it right and get memorable experiences from this event, we will ensure that firstly, people remember Cameroon's hosting of the AFCON and the international visitors will come back to our country. The local ones may also want to visit the cities they saw during the tournament because of what they remember. Secondly, maybe we can be a good example to other countries like us on how to best arrange the AFCON so that it is remembered for years to come [Member of local organizing committee].

You know, when the biggest countries hosted big events, they made sure that people remember the experiences. When they remember, they get excited about the event and will follow that event wherever it is hosted in future.

Discussion and conclusion

This study analysed the experiences associated with the AFCON event hosted in Cameroon in 2022, to identify the memorable experiences observed there. In this regard, the aim was to gain an understanding of the key takeaways in terms of experiences for event attendees within a resource-scarce context, as well as on Africa's premier sporting event. The study findings indicate that by and large, many aspects of the event and its organisation left positive experiences amongst the attendees which bode well for future events hosted there, and for lessons for other future hosts of the biggest football event in Africa. From a theoretical contribution perspective, the study expands on the theory of memorable experiences, especially as applicable to major events such as the AFCON. In this regard, the study shows the importance of understanding memorable experiences linked to the hosting of the event. In the existing literature on sports tourism on the continent specifically, but in the Global South generally, memorable experiences have been neglected, and as such key lessons on the areas for focus and improvement are not given the necessary attention. For example, in this study, it was found that the way the event is organised and planned is very satisfactory for the attendees. Equally impressive for them are issues linked to the atmosphere experienced in the event precinct as well as the high standards of facilities experienced at the more recently constructed stadiums. These were seen as the experiences that had an influential role in the intention to revisit the destination for other events, and following the event when it is hosted elsewhere. In this sense, the study draws some parallels with those previously conducted on event attendees' experiences at major sporting events, especially in the developed world context.

Despite the positive sentiments shared above regarding the positive experiences, the context of this study is one that is classified as a resource-scarce context. As such, it is typified by many structural challenges and funding constraints amongst other apparent issues and challenges. Thus, there were concerns raised relating to the ease into and out of the stadiums, although this tends to be the case in any major event that attracts large crowds. The scheduling of the games in terms of times was also raised as a concern and an experience that compromised the overall associations with the event. Coupled with this, were slight concerns about the quality of food and beverages as well as the service offered by staff and volunteers working at the stadiums. All these positive and negative experiences ought to be better understood in the contexts where the events are hosted, as a means to enhance the positive experiences, while decreasing those experiences that are negative. Secondly, and linked to the above, a

comprehensive understanding of these experiences would enable the event organisers to purposefully shape the staging of the event with specific aspects being modelled into meaningful experiences and memories for the attendees. In this way, the distinct features of Africa's premier event would be leveraged for the optimal satisfaction of those who attend, and equally create lasting memories of the local destinations, which may trigger repeat visitation and thus grow local tourism numbers. Ultimately, the study advances existing literature on memorable event experiences, while providing a basis for future research on this area within the African continent and resource-scarce context.

Relating to the managerial contribution of this work, key lessons can be learnt by the event organizers and marketers of major sporting events on the continent. In this way, we argue that they should be seeking to enhance the unique, memorable features of the organisation of their events as it is directly linked to what the attendees may associate with the event and the destinations going forward. We suggest that this should be extended beyond just the event features themselves, and rather be purposefully linked to the relationship between the attendees and the local community members where the event is hosted. In this regard, the impression made by the locals on the attendees may trigger an attachment to the place, and thus grow local tourism and contribute generally to local economic development. Additionally, better signage should be a goal for the event organisers and the local organising committees, as well as better crowd management. These would ensure that on one end, attendee flows in and out of the stadium are guided by solid signage and directions, whilst also ensuring that movement in and out and flow of the crowds is controlled. This could also be linked with better training of staff and volunteers on service excellence so that the experience of attendees with event staff is a positive, and memorable experience.

This study is not without its limitations, as is the case with all research endeavours. Firstly, due to time and financial constraints, not all the host cities were included in the study. Relatedly, a bigger sample size could not be attained due to the same factors. Finally, due to the lack of research on this area linked to the AFCON event, other AFCON events in other countries may yield different results in terms of memorable experiences, and thus future research could attempt to replicate and enhance the scope of experiences and items measured in this study. Our final suggestion for future research is linked to our feeling that, despite the noted experiences, for the optimal integration of these into event planning especially for the AFCON, future studies could incorporate some degree of post-event recollection. Perhaps this could include considering newspaper publications and interview excerpts from post-event conversations of experiences as well as the stories that would be told by attendees to those who did not attend as these all trigger the transformation of an event experience to a memorable event experience. In a similar notion, we suggest that post-event studies could explore if the memorable experiences do indeed trigger the decision to revisit the destination or the event, and what specific experiences were influential in this regard. The latter suggestion is important in the context of this study, where we have argued that resource-scarce economies may not be able to replicate some of the central features for this kind of event, such as constructing new stadia and accompanying infrastructure. Rather, how they could integrate the resources they have, to optimally exploit the potential of the memorable aspects highlighted in other host destinations would be their focus.

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