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Exploring Sports Business as a Tool for Promoting Entrepreneurship Among Youths in Ilorin Metropolis Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Despite the increasing recognition of sports business as a viable tool for promoting youth empowerment and economic development, its full potential remains largely underutilized. It is in line with this that, the study examined exploring sport Business as a tool for promoting entrepreneurship among youth in Ilorin metropolis Kwara State Nigeria. Descriptive research design of correlational type was adopted for the study. The target population comprised of youths who engaged in sport business. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 160 respondents. A validated researcher-structured questionnaire with 0.85r was used for data collection. The data collected were analysed using percentage, mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 alpha level. The result revealed a significant relationship between sports marketing and sport business in promoting entrepreneurship among youth. Also, there was a positive relationship between sports event management initiative and sports business in promoting entrepreneurship. There was a strong relationship between role of media broadcasting and sports business on promoting entrepreneurship among youth. The study therefore recommended that sport administrators should embark on sensitization programmes through the media on the contribution of sport marketing and effectiveness of sport business in promoting entrepreneurship among youth. Government should establish entrepreneurship centers for training of both media broadcasting and sports event management initiatives which can be acquired to promote entrepreneurship among youth.

Keywords

sports business, entrepreneurship, sports event management initiative, sports marketing

INTRODUCTION

Sports business offers opportunities for skill development and training for the young people in the community. Ajadi (2017) emphasized that sports business can provide youth with valuable skills, such as leadership, teamwork, and communication, through training programs, workshops, and mentorship initiatives. Sport business can also contribute to local economic growth and development. Roche (2018) highlighted that sports business can generate revenue, create jobs, and stimulate infrastructure development, ultimately contributing to the overall economic growth and development of the community. Sports business can have a positive social impact in promoting community engagement, social cohesion, and health and wellness initiatives. Masterman (2017) noted that sports business can foster social interaction, promote health and well-being, and contribute to economic development. The sports business industry also encourages innovation and creativity, providing opportunities for youth to develop new products, services, and experiences that meet the evolving needs of sports consumers.

While Nigeria has produced world-class athletes and achieved notable successes in various sports, the economic potential of the sports sector remains largely untapped (Ibrahim, 2017). The Nigerian economy, while possessing considerable resources and a large population, faces persistent challenges, including high rates of unemployment,

particularly among youth (Adebayo, 2015). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) consistently reports concerning unemployment figures, highlighting the urgent need for diversification of the economy and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities. In the fourth quarter of 2020, the national unemployment rate reached 33.3%, with youth unemployment significantly higher (NBS, 2020). This situation calls for innovative strategies to empower young people and equip them with the skills and opportunities necessary to contribute to the nation's economic development. Kwara State, located in the North Central region of Nigeria, shares in this national challenge of youth unemployment.

Despite the increasing recognition of sports business as a viable tool for promoting youth entrepreneurship and economic development, its full potential remains largely underutilized in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. Youth unemployment in the region continues to be a pressing concern, mirroring broader national trends. The lack of gainful employment opportunities has resulted in widespread poverty, heightened crime rates, social instability, and deepening frustration among the youth. While entrepreneurship is globally acknowledged as a catalyst for economic growth and social mobility, young people in Ilorin South face significant structural barriers including limited access to capital, absence of business mentorship, inadequate entrepreneurial education, and a stifling regulatory environment.

Youth entrepreneurship and development is a vital component of economic growth and development, particularly in developing countries. It refers to the process of empowering young people to create and manage their own businesses, thereby promoting economic growth, innovation, and sustainable development. According to the United Nations (2018), youth entrepreneurship is defined as "the process of creating and managing a business venture by young people, with the aim of generating income, creating employment opportunities and contributing to economic growth and development". Youth entrepreneurship and development are crucial for Nigeria's economic growth and employment generation. With over 70% of the population made up of youths, Nigeria has immense potential for entrepreneurship development (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). However, despite various initiatives, the country still struggles to provide opportunities for its young people.

The Nigerian government has recognized the importance of youth entrepreneurship and has established various initiatives to promote it. For instance, the Central Bank of Nigeria has established the Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme (YEDP) to provide timely and affordable finance to young entrepreneurs (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2016). This program aims to harness the latent entrepreneurial spirit of Nigerian youths and provide them with the necessary support to start and grow their businesses. In addition to the YEDP, the Nigerian government has also established other initiatives to promote youth entrepreneurship. For example, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has established a skills acquisition program to equip young graduates with entrepreneurial skills (National Youth Service Corps, 2020). The program provides training in various areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services.

Skill acquisition is critical for entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. Youths need to develop entrepreneurial skills through training and education to become efficient entrepreneurs. This is because entrepreneurship requires a range of skills including business planning, financial management, marketing, and leadership. According to Ogunyemi and Aluko (2020), business planning is a critical skill for entrepreneurs, as it enables them to create a comprehensive business plan, outlining goals, strategies, and financial projections. Financial management is also essential, as it allows entrepreneurs to manage finances effectively, including budgeting, forecasting, and securing funding (CBN, 2020). Marketing is another vital skill for entrepreneurs, as it enables them to develop and implement effective marketing strategies, reaching target audiences and driving sales (Getz 2016, Dhari, Slimani & Omri 2021).

Entrepreneurship education is a vital component in promoting youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria. By providing young people with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes, entrepreneurship education can empower them to start and grow their own businesses, thereby contributing to economic growth and development (Ibitoye 2025). Entrepreneurship education can be provided through various channels, including formal education institutions, vocational training centers, and online platforms. The curriculum should focus on developing practical skills, such as business planning, financial management, marketing, and leadership, as well as promoting entrepreneurial mindset and behavior (Adejumo, 2018).

The sports industry has become a significant sector of the global economy, with an estimated worth of over \$500 billion (Okonkwo, 2022). As the industry continues to grow, there is an increasing demand for professionals who possess the skills and knowledge to manage sports organizations, events, and facilities effectively. This is where sports management and entrepreneurship come into play. Sports management involves the application of business principles to the sports industry, while entrepreneurship involves the creation and management of new businesses or ventures (Ibitoye, 2025). This intersection offers exciting opportunities for individuals who are passionate about sports and business. Sports marketing is a subset of marketing that focuses on promoting sports teams, events, and products to a target audience (Mullin et al., 2014). It involves creating and implementing marketing strategies to reach and engage with sports fans, sponsors and other stakeholders. Sports marketing encompasses various aspects, including sponsorship and partnership development, brand management and licensing, event marketing and promotion, digital marketing and social media and public relations and communications. The sports marketing industry has experienced significant growth and transformation in recent years, driven by the increasing popularity of sports and the rise of digital media (Mullin et al., 2014). As a result, entrepreneurship in sports marketing has become a lucrative and exciting field, offering numerous opportunities for innovation and profit.

Entrepreneurship practices in sports business

Entrepreneur practices in sports business involves identifying and capitalizing on business opportunities in the sports industry (Adebayo & Ogundele 2029). Sports marketing entrepreneurs may start their own businesses, develop new products or services, or create innovative marketing campaigns. Successful sports marketing entrepreneurs possess a unique blend of skills, including creativity and innovation, risk-taking, strategic thinking, attention to detail, and exceptional communication and interpersonal skills.

The convergence of media, broadcasting, and entrepreneurship has emerged as a pivotal force in the sports industry, as entrepreneurs increasingly harness the power of media and broadcasting platforms to propel their sports-related ventures forward. By leveraging these platforms, entrepreneurs can effectively promote their brand, build a loyal following, and connect with their target audience in a meaningful way (Ajadi, 2018). The media plays a vital role in the development of sports entrepreneurship, serving as a catalyst for entrepreneurs to showcase their sports-related products or services, establish their brand identity, and foster connections with potential customers, investors, and partners (Mullin et al., 2014). Through various media channels, such as television, radio, print, and digital media, entrepreneurs can amplify their message, reach a wider audience, and generate buzz around their sports-related ventures.

Theoretical Bases of Research

Entrepreneurship is a complex and multi faceted phenomenon that has studies from theoretical perspective, one of the key framework is the entrepreneurial intention theory which suggests that entrepreneurial intentions are key predictor of entrepreneurial behavior. This theory was developed by Bird (1988) and Krueger et al (2000) that emphasis the important of attitudes people towards entrepreneurship programmes especially in the area of sports business on how it can be package to empwer the youth in the community to be self employed. According to Ibitoye (2025), the theoretical framework of entrepreneurship programmes in sports provides a platform for an individual in the society to be business granted through sports business. An individual who have a strong entrepreneurial intentions are likely to engage in sports business of sports marketing, event management initiatives and media broadcasting of commercializes of viewing centre and lot more.

Conceptual Framework

The proposed relationships between the study variables independent and dependent are shown in Fig. 1.

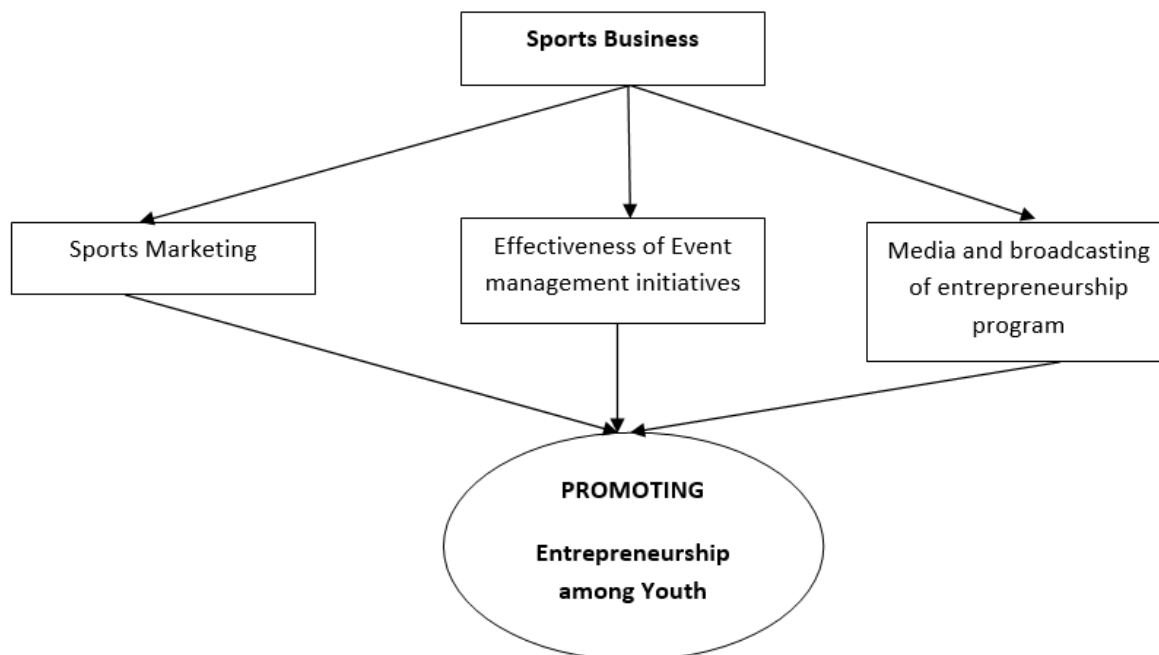


Fig. 1 Conceptual model research

H₀: There is no significant relationship between sports business and promotion of entrepreneurship among youth in Ilorin metropolis, kwara state.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive research design of correlational type was adopted for the study. This is because correlation type involved the collection of data, one of which was retrospective with a view to determine the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables (Owolabi, 2015) also it is suitable for the study because it enable the researchers to established a fact between sports business and entrepreneurship in the study. The population for the study comprises of all youth between the age range of 18 to 35 years old in Ilorin metropolis, kwara state Nigeria. These targeted youth are individuals who engaged in various sports related business such as sportswear sales, coaches, fitness instructors and sports events management. A multistage sampling technique of stratified and purposive sampling techniques was used to

select the sampled size for the study. The study area were stratified into 3 areas namely: Ilorin West Local Government, Ilorin East Local Government and Ilorin South Local government area. While purposive technique was used to select all the 56 youths in Ilorin West, 54 in Ilorin East and 50 youths in Ilorin South Local Government area who are engaging in sports business to survive. In all 160 respondents were sampled for the study. A researcher-structured questionnaire was used to gathered data for the study. The instrument was validated by experts in sports management in the Department of Business Management in University of Ilorin. The reliability level of the instrument was established through the split half method using cronbach alpha and a coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. The administration of the research instrument was done by the researcher and four trained research assistants. The research assistants were past graduate students in the department of Human Kinetics Education University of Ilorin and they were trained on how to interprete the respondents and how it would be distributed. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answered the research questions while inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the formulated hypotheses set for the study at 0.05 alpha level.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the impact of sports marketing on entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors among youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state?

Table 1 Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Sports Marketing on Entrepreneurial Intentions and Behaviors Among Youth

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1.	Sports sponsorship by major brands (e.g., Pepsi or MTN) increases public interest and participation in sports-related businesses among youth.	3.17	0.77	Agreed
2.	Popular athletes (e.g., Cristiano Ronaldo, Usain Bolt) endorsing sportswear influence young people to start or support similar sports businesses locally.	3.14	0.82	Agreed
3.	Promoting sports events in the media (radio, social media, billboards) helps attract youth to engage in sports-related entrepreneurship.	3.46	0.80	Agreed
4.	Selling branded merchandise (e.g., jerseys, boots) creates business opportunities and income for youth in my community.	3.61	0.49	Agreed

Table 1 presents the respondents' views on the impact of sports marketing on entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors among youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state. The mean scores for all four items exceed the benchmark of 2.50, indicating that respondents generally agree that sports marketing strategies positively influence youth entrepreneurship. The highest-rated item, with a mean of 3.61, indicates strong agreement that selling branded merchandise (e.g., jerseys, boots) provides tangible business opportunities and income for youth, suggesting that sports retailing is an accessible and attractive avenue for young entrepreneurs. The promotion of sports events through media platforms (mean = 3.46) also received a high level of endorsement, highlighting the media's role in mobilizing youth interest and participation in sports enterprises. Similarly, sports sponsorships by major brands (mean = 3.17) and endorsements by global athletes (mean = 3.14) are acknowledged as motivational tools that inspire youth to enter or support local sports businesses. Overall, the relatively low standard deviations (ranging from 0.49 to 0.82) suggest a high level of consistency in respondents' perceptions, indicating shared experiences and beliefs about the positive role of sports marketing in shaping entrepreneurial aspirations among youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state.

Research Question 2: Can events management and entertainment initiatives be effective tools for promoting entrepreneurship and job creation among youths in Ilorin metropolis kwara state?

Table 2 Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Effectiveness of Events Management in Promoting Entrepreneurship and Job Creation Among Youths

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1.	Organising sports event creates temporary and permanent job opportunities for youth in my community.	3.59	0.49	Agreed
2.	Event management in sports (e.g., tournaments, fitness shows) encourages youth to start businesses such as ticketing, food vending, or logistics.	3.40	0.49	Agreed
3.	Training youth in sports event planning and management helps them develop entrepreneurial skills.	3.55	0.55	Agreed
4.	Sports events sponsored by organisations or government bodies offer platforms for youth to showcase and sell their products or services.	3.54	0.79	Agreed

Table 2 presents respondents' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of events management and entertainment initiatives in promoting entrepreneurship and job creation among youths in Ilorin metropolis kwara state. All four items recorded mean scores well above the 2.50 benchmark, indicating strong agreement that event-based sports activities contribute meaningfully to youth entrepreneurship. The highest-rated item, with a mean of 3.59, reflects strong consensus that organising sports events leads to both temporary and permanent employment opportunities, affirming the economic relevance of such initiatives. Close behind is the belief that training youth in event planning fosters entrepreneurial skills (mean = 3.55), underscoring the developmental value of capacity-building programs. Respondents also agree that sponsored sports events provide youth with platforms to showcase or sell products (mean = 3.54), and that event management drives business ventures in ticketing, vending, and logistics (mean = 3.40). The low standard deviations (ranging from 0.49 to 0.79) reflect a high degree of consistency in responses, suggesting a shared understanding that sports event management is a practical, impactful strategy for stimulating youth entrepreneurship and employment.

Research Question 3: What role do media and broadcasting play on the influence of entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors among youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state?

Table 3 Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Role of Media and Broadcasting in Influencing Entrepreneurial Attitudes and Behaviours

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1.	Media coverage of successful youth in sports business inspires others to start similar entrepreneurial ventures.	3.53	0.74	Agreed
2.	Sports programs on radio and TV encourage youth to see entrepreneurship as a viable career path.	3.49	0.62	Agreed
3.	Media platforms provide useful information and exposure that shape youth attitudes towards sports business and entrepreneurship.	3.28	0.93	Agreed
4.	Broadcasting entrepreneurial success stories in sports motivates youth to take business risks and become self-employed.	2.99	0.43	Agreed

Table 3 presents respondents' views on the role of media and broadcasting in influencing entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours among youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state. All items recorded mean values above the 2.50 benchmark, indicating overall agreement on the positive influence of media in this context. The highest-rated item, with a mean of 3.53, reveals that media coverage of successful youth in sports business strongly inspires others to engage in similar ventures. Similarly, sports programs aired on radio and TV (mean = 3.49) are perceived to positively influence youths by framing entrepreneurship as a viable and attractive career path. Media platforms are also seen as effective in providing exposure and useful information (mean = 3.28) that help shape entrepreneurial attitudes. Additionally, broadcasting entrepreneurial success stories in sports (mean = 2.99) is regarded as a motivational tool that encourages youth to take calculated business risks. The relatively low standard deviations (ranging from 0.43 to 0.93) suggest a consistent perception among respondents regarding media's encouraging role in shaping youth entrepreneurial behaviour.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between sports marketing and effectiveness of sport business as a tool for promoting entrepreneurship among youths in Ilorin metropolis kwara state.

Table 4 Correlation Result on Sports Marketing and Effectiveness of Sport Business

Status	N	Mean $\bar{X}$	SD	Df	Cal. r-value	Crit. r-value	Remark
Sports Marketing	160	13.39	2.371	158	0.834*	0.155	Significant
Effectiveness of Sport Business	160	54.79	3.531				

***Significant at 0.05**

Table 4 revealed the calculated p-value of 0.834 and critical r-value of 0.155 with 158 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated p-value is greater than the critical r-value hence the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship sports marketing and effectiveness of sports business as a tool for promoting entrepreneurship among youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state was hereby rejected this indicate a strong positive relationship between sport marketing and the effectiveness of sports business in promoting entrepreneurship among youths in Ilorin metropolis kwara state.

H₀₂: There is no relationship between effectiveness of events management and effectiveness of sport business as a tool for promoting entrepreneurship among youths in Ilorin metropolis Kwara state.

Table 5 Correlation Result on Effectiveness of Events Management and Effectiveness of Sport Business

Status	N	Mean $\bar{X}$	SD	Df	Cal. r-value	Crit. r-value	Remark
Effectiveness of Events Management	160	14.09	1.210	158	-0.057*	0.155	Not significant
Effectiveness of Sport Business	160	54.79	3.531				

***Significant at 0.05**

Table 5 shows the calculated p-value of 0.257 and critical r-value of 0.155 with 158 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level, since the calculated p-value is greater than the r-value hence the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant relationship between effectiveness of event management and sport business as a tools for promoting entrepreneurship among youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state was hereby rejected this means that there is positive relationship between the effectiveness of event management and promotion of entrepreneurship of sport business among youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between role of media and broadcasting and effectiveness of sport business as a tool for promoting entrepreneurship among youths in Ilorin metropolis kwara state.

Table 6 Correlation Result on Role of Media and Broadcasting and Effectiveness of Sport Business

Status	N	Mean $\bar{X}$	SD	Df	Cal. r-value	Crit. r-value	Remark
Role of Media and Broadcasting	160	13.29	1.272	158	0.797*	0.155	Significant
Effectiveness of Sport Business	160	54.79	3.531				

***Significant at 0.05**

Table 6indicated the calculated p-value of 0.797 and critical r-value of 0.155 with 158 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated p-value is greater than the critical r-value hence the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant relationship between role of media broadcasting and sport business as a tool for promoting entrepreneurship among youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state was hereby rejected this implies that there is a strong positive relationship between the role of media broadcasting and promotion of entrepreneurship in sport business among youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state.

DISCUSSION

Research question one findings strongly suggest that sports marketing strategies play a crucial role in shaping entrepreneurial behaviours among youth. Sponsorships, especially by well-known brands like Pepsi and MTN, increase youth visibility and interest in sports-related ventures, serving as both inspiration and opportunity. This aligns with the view of Okonkwo(2020), who stated that “corporate sponsorship in Nigerian sports has proven to be a catalyst for youth empowerment and micro-enterprise development”. Mendorsements by global sports figures also create aspirational influence. According to Nwankwo (2021), “athlete celebrity endorsement not only builds brand equity but also encourages imitation among young people who associate success with visibility and athletic entrepreneurship”. Media coverage plays a central role in shaping youth engagement. As emphasized by Ogunyemi et al (2020), “social media and traditional platforms have become essential in promoting youth-led sports ventures, especially in underserved communities”. The unanimous agreement on the value of selling branded merchandise underscores how commercial elements of sports can translate into tangible income and employment for young entrepreneurs. As supported by the research of Ajadi (2018), “branded sports merchandise offers low-barrier entry points into entrepreneurship, especially in local Nigerian markets where sports fandom is high”. Also, the finding from tested hypothesis one reveal that there is a significant relationship between sport marketing and effectiveness of sport business in promoting entrepreneurship among youth. This result the supported the findings of Okonkwo (2022) who affirmed that when business are effectively marketed, they are more likely to attract investors and other business innovations that will promote entrepreneurship in sports.

Research question two findings of this study mirror earlier research showing that sports-based initiatives can reduce youth unemployment by opening informal business avenues such as logistics, vending, and digital services (Roche 2018). These events also serve as incubators for skill acquisition in areas like planning, marketing, and financial management, which are key entrepreneurial competencies. The role of government and private sponsorship in expanding access to business opportunities is critical. As observed by Adebayo (2020), government-sponsored community events “offer vital spaces for youth to not only engage in income-generating activities but also build networks and test their business ideas in real markets”. This synergy between event sponsorship, skill training, and entrepreneurship underlines a

sustainable model for youth development and economic growth. The findings from tested hypothesis two revealed that there is a significant relationship between the effectiveness of event management of sport business in promoting entrepreneurship among youth this result is in line with the findings of Ibrahim (2017) who stressed that poor planning and low community engagement can lead to failure on the part of event manager in sport business. Research question three results highlight the media's ability to inspire, educate, and motivate young people by showcasing relatable success stories and offering relevant business insights. This aligns with the findings of Adebayo (2020), who observed that “media portrayal of entrepreneurial role models leads to increased entrepreneurial intentions among young Nigerians”. Masterman (2017) noted that “sports and entertainment media platforms have emerged as significant informal learning environments, equipping youth with knowledge and motivation to pursue business opportunities”. The powerful impact of radio, TV, and digital platforms is evident in this study’s data, reinforcing the role of broadcasting in shaping entrepreneurial culture. The finding from tested hypothesis three revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between role of media broadcasting and promotion of entrepreneurship in sport business among the youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state this result buttress the finding of Adebayo (2015) who affirmed that the role of media platform play a critical role in shaping youth entrepreneur engagement in sport business.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the funding of the study the following conclusions were drawn. Sports marketing of sports products often sensed as sports business that promote entrepreneurship skills among youth, also effectiveness of management initiatives enhances the sports Events tools for promoting entrepreneurship of sports business and effectiveness of Media broadcasting of sport business served as a career that promote entrepreneurship among youth in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State.

Finally, according to the result of the research, it is recommended that, the: Sport administration should create more awareness on the contributions of sport marketing through sports business to promote entrepreneurship among the youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state, Both the government and the sport administrators should partner with the private sectors in the area of event management of sports business that can provide a platform for youth to engage in entrepreneurship skill in sports, Government should established a centre for Entrepreneurship training of both media broad casting and sports event management initiatives to power sports business in promoting entrepreneurship among the youth in Ilorin metropolis kwara state, Nigeria. However, for better generalization other stakeholders in sports industry such as sports Federation. National Sports Commission and Director of Sports should come up with a framework that would align with policy of the central bank of Nigeria on how to empower the youth through the initiative of Small Medium Business Enterprise programmes for the youth by accessing the soft loan to promote sports business.

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