



ASSESSING NIGERIA'S CAPACITY TO HOST MEGA EVENTS: A STUDY OF AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS (AFCON), 2023

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Sporting events have assumed a major social-recreational and economic activities nationally and globally, making them to require sufficient capacity for the hosting.

Problem Statement: However, Mega sport events have witnessed failures across their strategic parts in Nigeria, such as in poor facilities, funding debacle, quality of officiating personnel etc.

Objectives: This study therefore accessed and investigated Nigeria's capacity in hosting mega sport events with particular focus on Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), 2023 amongst others.

Methodology: The study adopted mixed research method by random survey of 150 participants (respondents) from Ekiti state, Nigeria using structured questionnaire in data collection.

Analysis: Using descriptive analysis techniques such as pie, chart,

Result/Findings: The study revealed that poor funding affected the abysmal level facilities, while poor officiating is as a result of quality of knowledge of personnel, inadequate planning and execution etc led to the noticed failure of AFCON games.

Conclusion/Recommendation: While conclude that Nigeria hosting capacity in mega sporting event lies with sufficient resources including manpower, financial and physical assets, it is recommended the public and private sector investment, must be explored to ensure qualitative hosting capacity in Nigeria, thereby helping future games to attain expectations of participants.

KEYWORDS

Capacity, Facility,
Mega, Sports,
Tourism.

Introduction

According to Hemmonsbey and Tichaawa (2018) sports tourism is the activity of visiting different places to watch or take part in athletic activities. It has a major impact on how economies and cultures are shaped worldwide. Hemmonsbey and Tichaawa (2018) note that sports tourism has emerged as a major global phenomenon, with high-profile events such as the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) capturing attention worldwide. In the context of Nigeria, Nyikana (2016) suggests that hosting such prestigious events can have both positive and negative impacts on the local population. According to Marumo et al. (2015), the sports tourism sector has experienced substantial growth, not only as an industry but also as a significant area of research and a tool for fostering economic and social development in many communities and countries.

As highlighted by Tichaawa et al. (2018), sporting events are pivotal in fueling the growth of sports tourism. Steinbrink et al. (2011) further emphasize that sports tourism, particularly mega-events, has become increasingly appealing to countries across Africa, especially emerging nations. Marumo et al. (2015) observe that, traditionally dependent on industries like mining and agriculture, many emerging economies have been propelled by globalization to diversify their economies, with sports tourism playing a central role in this transition. Bob and Swart (2010) argue that promoting sports tourism as part of a broader economic strategy can create event-driven economies, thereby spurring growth and development in the host country. The pursuit of hosting sports tourism events by emerging economies is often based on the belief that such events offer avenues for both short-term and long-term economic benefits, such as tourism revenue, infrastructure development, and job creation (Diedrich & Garcia-Buades, 2009).

Studies of major sporting events have gained momentum in recent years due to the extensive media attention directed at the countries and destinations hosting these events (Yen & Kerstetter, 2009). Additionally, the potential political and socio-economic benefits that successful event hosting brings have been widely publicized (Kumar & Hussain, 2014; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2023; Salgado-Barandela et al., 2021). Wang and Jin (2019) assert that such sports events have been instrumental in the development of several destinations. Coates (2012), however, posits that the benefits of hosting sports events are closely linked to the scale of the event, with smaller community events yielding different outcomes than hallmark or mega-events. Hallmark events, typically destination-bound and held regularly, contrast with mega-events like the FIFA World Cup, the Olympics, and AFCON, which rotate between countries and attract global attention (Yao & Schwarz, 2018). This international appeal explains the highly competitive nature of bidding to host such events (Arnegger & Herz, 2016; Jago et al., 2010). Johnston et al. (2021) highlight the critical role that host communities play in the successful organization of sports events, with local support being essential for fostering a festive atmosphere and creating lasting memories for both residents and visitors (Al-Emadi et al., 2017; Gursoy & Kendall, 2006).

Tichaawa et al. (2018) note that sports tourism is increasingly being utilized to revitalize both rural and urban communities in emerging economies. According to Njoroge et al. (2017), the benefits of hosting sports events extend beyond economic gains, with long-term advantages that contribute to sustainable development. For instance, sport tourism can accelerate the development of infrastructure and the establishment of leisure and sporting facilities, which, in turn, attract investment in the local hospitality and catering industries.

Bob and Swart (2010), Njoroge et al. (2017), and Weed and Bull (2009) emphasize that such investments enhance the attractiveness of the destination, fostering the growth of small- to medium-sized businesses, which are crucial to local economic development (Tichaawa, 2017). Bouhaouala (2015) adds that, in many economies, sport tourism serves as a driver of growth, creating socio-economic opportunities such as employment and business prospects for local communities.

The positive impacts of sports tourism extend not only to individuals but also to entire communities and nations. One of the primary benefits is the boost to the local economy. Hosting sports events like AFCON can attract significant numbers of visitors, resulting in increased spending on accommodation, transportation, food, and souvenirs (Adebayo & Akinlabi, 2023). This influx of tourists creates job opportunities in sectors such as hospitality, tourism, and retail, providing a source of income for many Nigerians. Adebayo and Akinlabi (2023) further note that one of the key advantages of sports tourism is its ability to stimulate economic growth through increased revenue from tourism, with visitors contributing to local economies by attending matches, staying in hotels, dining in restaurants, and purchasing goods. However, sports tourism has a fair share of environmental problems. As noted by Osuoha, et al (2025) sports tourism has potential for overcrowding, pollution and therefore the need for effective waste management during such events.

Nigeria's enthusiasm for football, coupled with its cultural diversity, positions the country as a potential powerhouse in the African sports landscape. AFCON, Africa's premier football tournament, provides an invaluable opportunity for Nigeria to showcase its football culture, promote tourism, and foster international relations (Ogunbiyi, 2022). However, despite the country's passion for football, questions have arisen regarding its ability to host large-scale sporting events like AFCON. Nigeria's previous bids for the 2025 and 2027 AFCON tournaments were unsuccessful, highlighting the need for a critical assessment of its preparedness for hosting such events. Recent years have seen Nigeria make strides in improving its infrastructure and institutional readiness to host large-scale events. In light of its failure to secure the 2025 and 2027 AFCON tournaments, there is a pressing need to evaluate Nigeria's readiness for hosting AFCON 2023. This study aims to examine Nigeria's current capabilities, challenges, and opportunities in the context of hosting this prestigious tournament, thereby providing a comprehensive analysis of the feasibility of hosting AFCON 2023.

While Nigeria is considered a footballing giant in Africa, doubts persist regarding the country's ability to host mega sports events like AFCON. The country has encountered challenges in infrastructure development, event management, and meeting the international standards set by the Confederation of African Football (CAF). Despite its rich footballing culture and large fan base, Nigeria's attempts to host AFCON have been thwarted by various obstacles. This raises the question of whether the country has the necessary resources, infrastructure, and organizational frameworks to successfully host a tournament of this magnitude.

Historically, Nigeria has had limited success in hosting large-scale international sporting events. Nevertheless, the country has continued to pursue such opportunities in order to boost tourism, stimulate local economies, and enhance its global reputation (Akinwumi, 2022). AFCON, as one of the most widely followed football tournaments in Africa, presents Nigeria with a significant opportunity to leverage its passionate fan base and tourism potential. In recent years, the Nigerian government has made significant efforts to improve infrastructure, with the National Sports Commission and state governments spearheading projects to modernize existing stadiums and build new facilities in major cities such as Lagos, Abuja, and Benin City. Despite these improvements, Nigeria continues to face

challenges, particularly regarding the timely completion of infrastructure projects, the maintenance of existing facilities, and the coordination of logistics and security for large events (Nwachukwu, 2021). Nigeria's inability to secure hosting rights for AFCON 2025 and 2027 underscores the critical gaps that need to be addressed before the country can host future mega-events. These setbacks highlight the need for strategic planning, thorough evaluation of facilities, and increased collaboration between government and private sector stakeholders. The Nigerian government has responded by expediting infrastructural developments, with the Lagos Arena and ongoing renovations to key stadiums being prime examples of efforts aimed at enhancing Nigeria's capacity to host international sporting events. Given the rising competition for hosting rights to major sporting events, it is crucial to understand Nigeria's capacity to host AFCON 2023 successfully. This research evaluates Nigeria's infrastructure, governmental policies, and institutional readiness, providing actionable recommendations for enhancing the country's chances of securing future bids for similar events. Furthermore, there is a notable gap in empirical research regarding Nigeria's alignment with the institutional, infrastructural, and economic demands of hosting a mega sporting event. This study will identify the key factors influencing Nigeria's ability to host AFCON 2023 and evaluate the challenges and possible solutions to these obstacles.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This research was conducted in Ado-Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti State, in southwestern Nigeria. As one of the state's most developed urban centers, Ado-Ekiti holds both historical and modern significance. It was once the seat of the pre-colonial Ekiti Kingdom and is well known for its rich cultural heritage. The city is predominantly inhabited by the Yoruba ethnic group and has an estimated population of over 500,000, making it one of the more populous cities in Nigeria.

Ado-Ekiti boasts a thriving sports culture, particularly in football, and is home to several sports facilities and active fan clubs that support and participate in sporting events at both urban and rural levels. This active engagement with sports makes Ado-Ekiti an ideal location for studying the awareness of sports tourism.

The study utilized a descriptive and survey-based research design, allowing for the systematic collection of primary data through a structured questionnaire. This approach was chosen to effectively gather the participants' perceptions on Nigeria's capacity to host mega events: A feasibility study of 2023 AFCON.

The research was conducted across several communities within the Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Due to logistical constraints, it was not possible to study the entire population. As a result, the study focused on a sample of 150 respondents selected from different communities within the Local Government Area.

To address the research objectives and variables, both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods were employed. This mixed-methods approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of the subject, enabling triangulation and enhancing the reliability of the findings.

Although the study is limited to Ado-Ekiti, the insights gained may apply to other urban centers in Nigeria that share similar socio-cultural dynamics and levels of sports engagement.

Cochran's equation of finite population was used to determine the sample of the study. The formula is stated below:

$$N_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2 N}$$

$$N_0 = \frac{SS}{1 + \frac{(SS-1)}{Pop}}$$

Where

SS = Sample size

Pop = Population

n = sample size

Z = Z value of confidence level.

P = Estimated proportion of an attribute present in the population

q = 1-p

e = Desired level of precision expressed in decimal.

N= Population size.

Using a 90% confidence interval; Z = 1.645

e = ± 10% = 0.1

p = 0.5 (maximum variable)

q = 1- 0.5 = 0.5

N = 0.5

$$N_0 = \frac{(2.53)^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{(0.10)^2} = 160$$

$$N_0 = \frac{160}{1 + \frac{(160-1)}{4300}} = 153.85 \approx 150$$

The sampling procedure employed in this study involved the random selection of residential divisions within the Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area. A simple random sampling technique was adopted to ensure that each unit of the population had an equal chance of being selected, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

Primary data served as the main source of information for this study. This data was collected using a structured questionnaire, which was administered to residents across various communities within the study area. The questionnaire served as the principal research instrument and was designed to elicit responses relevant to the research objectives.

The questionnaire consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions. The close-ended questions formed the structured core of the instrument and were primarily used to facilitate quantitative analysis. The open-ended questions, on the other hand, were incorporated to capture more nuanced responses and to provide a more holistic understanding of the participants' perspectives.

The items in the questionnaire addressed key issues related to assessing Nigeria's capacity to host mega events: A feasibility study. of 2023 AFCON. The questionnaire utilized a Likert scale ranging from Yes to No allowing respondents to express the degree of their agreement with each statement. For the purpose of data analysis, the study employed the Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient. This statistical technique was selected due to the quantitative nature of the data collected, which comprised ordinal variables that could be ranked. Spearman's correlation is particularly appropriate when assessing the strength and direction of association between two ranked variables.

This method was deemed suitable as the study fulfilled the required conditions for its application, including: an adequate sample size (minimum of 10 observations), independent observations, data presented in frequency form, and use of the entire dataset without omissions. The technique also allows

for the testing of hypotheses by comparing observed values against expected values under the assumption that the null hypothesis is true.

Moreover, degrees of freedom, determined by sample size, were considered in interpreting the significance of the correlation coefficients. The use of this technique enabled the researcher to examine the strength of association between variables and provided insights into the overall distribution of responses in relation to the research hypotheses.

Due to the nature and number of the variables involved in this study, quantitative data analysis was used to process the data. For the quantitative analysis Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 17) was used to process the data. For the lower version of analysis for the perception of respondent's percentages were used to analyse the data. This means that the analysis was done on the content of the data which were collected.

RESULTS

Figure 1 illustrates the response rate recorded during the data collection phase of this study. Out of a total of 150 questionnaires distributed across the selected study locations, 143 questionnaires were successfully retrieved, representing a response rate of 95.33%, while 7 questionnaires (4.67%) were not returned.

This high response rate was facilitated by the method of administration. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires and waited while participants completed them, enabling immediate collection. This approach minimized loss and ensured that the intended sample size was maintained, thereby preserving the representativeness of the target population and enhancing the validity and reliability of the study's findings.

All retrieved questionnaires were subsequently organized, coded, and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for systematic analysis. The data were then interpretively analyzed to derive meaningful insights in line with the study's objectives.

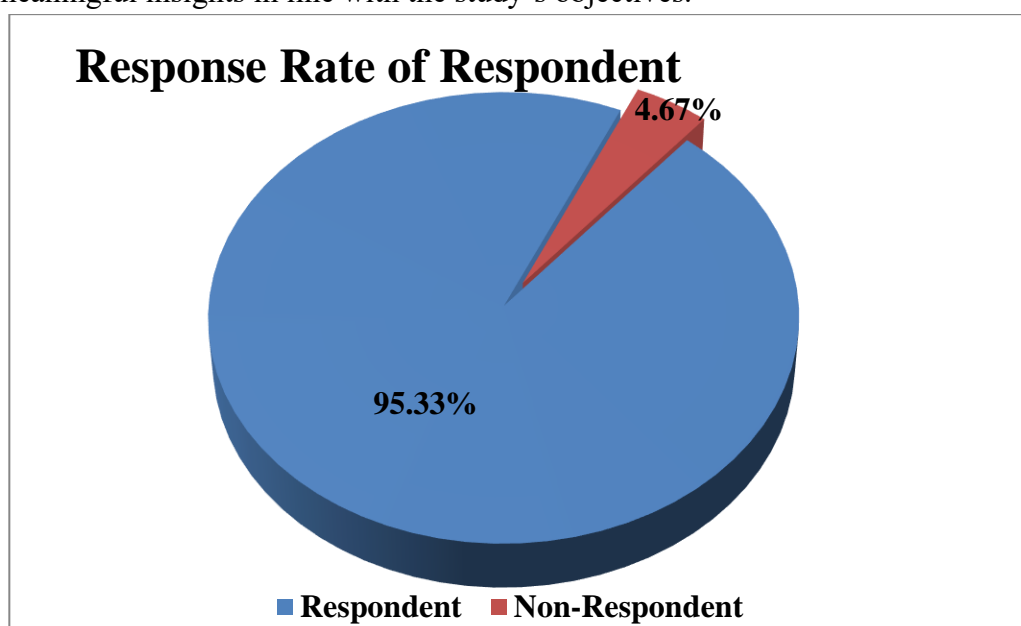


Figure 1. Response rate of respondent during the course of the study

Personal Details of Respondents**Table 1. Personal details of respondent during the course of this study**

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	91	63.64
	Female	52	36.36
	Total	143	100%
Age bracket	18-30 years	38	26.57
	31-50 years	65	45.46
	51 and above	40	27.97
	Total	143	100%
Educational attainment	SSCE	30	20.98
	NCE/OND	37	25.87
	B.Sc/B.Ed	51	35.66
	Ph.D	5	3.50
	No formal	20	13.99
	Total	143	100%
Nationality	Nigerian	137	95.80%
	Foreigner	6	4.20%
	Total	143	100%
Marital Status	Single	56	39.16
	Married	67	46.85
	Divorced	20	13.99
	Total	143	100%
	Total	143	100%

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The presentation and analysis of the demographic characteristics of respondents are summarized in Table 1. The study sought to determine the gender distribution of participants. As indicated, 63.64% (n = 91) of the respondents were male, while 36.36% (n = 52) were female. Regarding age distribution, 26.57% (n = 38) of respondents fell within the 18–30-year age bracket, 45.46% (n = 65) were aged between 31 and 50 years, and 27.97% (n = 40) were aged 51 years and above. In terms of educational attainment, 20.98% (n = 30) of respondents held a Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE), 25.87% (n = 37) possessed an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) or Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), while 35.66% (n = 51) held a Bachelor's degree (B.Sc./B.Ed). A smaller percentage, 3.50% (n = 5), were Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) holders, and 13.99% (n = 20) had no formal education. The nationality of respondents revealed that the vast majority, 95.80% (n = 137), were Nigerian citizens, whereas 4.20% (n = 6) were non-Nigerians. Marital status distribution showed that 39.16% (n = 56) of respondents were single, 46.85% (n = 67) were married, and 13.99% (n = 20) were divorced at the time the study was conducted.

Evaluation on the feasibility of Nigeria to host a footballing competition like AFCON**Table 2: Respondents' knowledge on whether Nigeria's current infrastructure status is in advanced and efficient condition to host a competition like AFCON**

Is Nigeria's current infrastructure status is in advanced and efficient condition to host a competition like AFCON?		
Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	105	73.43
No	38	26.57
Total	143	100%

Table 2 above shows percentage distribution of responses to if Nigeria's current infrastructure status is in advanced and efficient condition to host a competition like AFCON. 73.43% (105) of the respondents reported 'Yes' while the remaining 26.57% (38) of the respondents reported 'No'. This revealed that Nigeria's current infrastructure status is in advanced and efficient condition to host a competition like AFCON.

Table 3: Respondents' knowledge on whether Nigeria has the financial capability to host a footballing competition like AFCON in Nigeria

Does Nigeria have the financial capability to host a footballing competition like AFCON in Nigeria?		
Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	88	61.54
No	55	38.46
Total	143	100%

Table 3 above shows percentage distribution of responses to if Nigeria has the financial capability to host a footballing competition like AFCON in Nigeria. 61.54% (88) of the respondents reported 'Yes' while the remaining 38.46% (55) of the respondents reported 'No'. This depicts that Nigeria has the financial capability to host a footballing competition like AFCON in Nigeria.

Table 4. Respondents' knowledge on whether Nigeria is highly prepared and equipped in terms of meeting security requirements to host a competition like AFCON

Is Nigeria highly prepared and equipped in terms of meeting security requirements to host a competition like AFCON?		
Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	121	84.62
No	22	15.39
Total	143	100%

Table 4 above shows percentage distribution of responses to if Nigeria is highly prepared and equipped in terms of meeting security requirements to host a competition like AFCON. 84.62% (121) of the respondents reported 'Yes' while the remaining 15.39% (22) of the respondents reported 'No'. This sustained that Nigeria is highly prepared and equipped in terms of meeting security requirements to host a competition like AFCON.

Table 5: Respondents' knowledge on whether Nigeria is highly prepared and equipped in terms of influx of population to host a competition like AFCON

Is Nigeria highly prepared and equipped in terms of influx of population to host a competition like AFCON?		
Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	119	83.22
No	24	16.78
Total	143	100%

Table 5 above shows percentage distribution of responses to whether Nigeria is highly prepared and equipped in terms of influx of population to host a competition like AFCON. 83.22% (119) of the respondents reported 'Yes' while the remaining 16.78% (24) of the respondents reported 'No'. This sustained that Nigeria is highly prepared and equipped in terms of influx of population to host a competition like AFCON.

Table 6: Respondents' knowledge on whether Nigeria is highly prepared and equipped in terms implementation of strict organizational structure to host a competition like AFCON.

Is Nigeria highly prepared and equipped in terms implementation of strict organizational structure to host a competition like AFCON?		
Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	129	90.80
No	14	9.20
Total	143	100%

Table 6 above shows percentage distribution of responses to whether Nigeria is highly prepared and equipped in terms implementation of strict organizational structure to host a competition like AFCON. 90.80% (129) of the respondents reported 'Yes' while the remaining 9.20% (14) of the respondents reported 'No'. This sustained that Nigeria is highly prepared and equipped in terms implementation of strict organizational structure to host a competition like AFCON.

Hypothesis Testing

Variables	ΣX	ΣX^2	ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-val
The feasibility of Nigeria to host a footballing competition like AFCON	699	3189	5674	0.91	
Impacts on an Average Nigerian	184	2815			

Significant 0.05 level, critical $r=0.162$, $df=474$.

From the result above Table 7, the calculated r-value of 0.91 is higher than the critical r-value of 0.162 at 0.05 levels of significance and 474 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternate hypothesis which revealed that hosting AFCON footballing competition has a significant impact on the average Nigerian.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2		R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.392 ^a	0.132	0.25	0.782	.00000	8.011	11	452	.000	0.123.

a Predictors: (Constant), AFCON footballing competition

b Dependent Variable: tourism development and socio-cultural and economic development

The result of the regression analysis on Table 8 shows a yielded coefficient of regression (R) of 0.392 and a multiple regression R-square (R^2) of 0.132, and adjusted R^2 of 0.25, at 0.01 level of significance, the result is significant, the result also shows that an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the multiple regressions produced an F-ratio of 8.819, while the f-critical value is 1.91 (2-tailed), since the calculated F-value of 8.011 is greater than the critical F-value of 1.91, at 0.05 significant level, (2-tailed), the result is also significant at 0.05 level. The significance of this result is that the AFCON footballing competition has a significant impact on the average Nigerian.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study on the feasibility of Nigeria hosting a major football tournament such as the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) provide compelling evidence that the country possesses the foundational capacity to successfully organize and manage an event of such magnitude. Findings revealed that Nigeria's infrastructure is currently in an advanced and efficient condition, encompassing stadium facilities, transport networks, hospitality structures, and technological systems—all of which are crucial for hosting international sporting events. The findings also indicate that Nigeria has the financial capability required to undertake the comprehensive planning and execution involved in organizing a competition like AFCON. The availability of public and private sector investment, coupled with strategic fiscal planning, enhances Nigeria's capacity to meet the economic demands of such a tournament.

The study further established that Nigeria is well-equipped in terms of meeting international security requirements. Participants highlighted the presence of responsive security agencies, intelligence coordination, and emergency management systems as evidence of the country's preparedness to ensure

the safety of players, officials, tourists, and local attendees. This is particularly important given the scale of population influx that such events typically attract. Nigeria's ability to manage large crowds, ensure transportation fluidity, and provide accommodation and health services demonstrates its readiness for high-level sporting events.

Furthermore, the implementation of strict organizational structures was identified as a strength. Respondents emphasized the role of national bodies such as the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, in laying down protocols for logistics, stakeholder coordination, and compliance with Confederation of African Football (CAF) requirements. These organizational frameworks are integral to ensuring smooth planning and execution across various sectors.

These findings are in alignment with Eshetu (2014), who highlighted that certain African countries, including Nigeria, have evolved in their institutional and infrastructural preparedness for hosting mega-events due to sustained investment and policy reforms. Similarly, Hemmonsbey and Tichaawa (2018) emphasized that emerging economies in Africa are increasingly leveraging sport tourism and mega-events as vehicles for development, supported by growing infrastructure and organizational sophistication.

Moreover, Ogunbiyi (2022) asserts that Nigeria's football culture, economic potential, and population size make it a natural candidate for hosting continental tournaments, while Adebayo and Akinlabi (2023) report that the country's hospitality and tourism sectors are experiencing rapid growth spurred by efforts to attract international attention. These improvements are especially visible in urban centers like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, where stadia, transport systems, and accommodation facilities have been upgraded to meet global standards (Nwachukwu, 2021).

Additionally, Adeola and Adesina (2020) affirm that Nigeria's transportation and urban planning sectors are increasingly capable of supporting large-scale events, owing to recent investments in intermodal systems and smart city initiatives. The nation's ability to host large national festivals and international fixtures in the past is also a testament to its operational readiness (Suleiman and Adigun, 2021). According to Nyikana and Tichaawa (2023), Nigeria's previous bids for AFCON demonstrate a strategic commitment to enhancing its position in Africa's sports tourism landscape.

Overall, this study reinforces the notion that Nigeria is not only willing but also increasingly capable of hosting a mega-sporting event like the AFCON. The findings align with a body of existing literature that acknowledges the country's advancements in infrastructure, financial readiness, organizational structure, and security apparatus. With sustained commitment and strategic planning, Nigeria can position itself as a reliable host for future international sporting competitions.

In addition, the negative impact of sports tourism should also be considered. As noted by Osuoha, et al (2025), sports events such as AFCON is a source of pollution and overcrowding which have negative consequences on the environment. Efforts should therefore be made to limit the negative impacts of sports tourism on the environment by the relevant stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

The feasibility study examining Nigeria's capacity to host a major football tournament like the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) has produced valuable insights that underscore the nation's readiness across multiple critical dimensions. The findings demonstrate that Nigeria, despite past setbacks in securing

hosting rights, possesses the infrastructural, financial, organizational, and security capabilities required to successfully organize and manage a continental football competition.

The research revealed that Nigeria's infrastructural landscape—ranging from modern stadia and road networks to upgraded hospitality facilities—is at a level that can support the influx of international visitors, athletes, and dignitaries. This infrastructural development, particularly in urban centers such as Lagos, Abuja, and Benin City, affirms the nation's commitment to aligning with global standards in sports event hosting. Moreover, the financial assessment indicates that Nigeria has both public and private funding mechanisms that can be leveraged for large-scale event planning, especially with increasing government interest in promoting sports tourism as a vehicle for economic diversification. Security preparedness emerged as another core strength, with respondents affirming the functionality of Nigeria's security agencies and their record in managing mass gatherings and high-profile events. The ability to coordinate crowd control, emergency response, and surveillance systems further enhances Nigeria's credibility as a potential host nation. Additionally, the presence of well-structured sports governance institutions, particularly the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), contributes significantly to the overall organizational readiness of the country. These bodies serve as the backbone for regulatory compliance, stakeholder engagement, and logistical execution, ensuring that hosting mandates align with the Confederation of African Football (CAF) expectations.

Importantly, these findings are consistent with earlier research and expert commentaries (Eshetu, 2014; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2018; Ogunbiyi, 2022; Adebayo & Akinlabi, 2023), which emphasize that Nigeria's sociopolitical will, growing infrastructure, and strategic policy directions make it a strong candidate for mega-sporting events. While Nigeria may have failed in its bids to host AFCON 2025 and 2027, these setbacks offer important lessons that can help refine future hosting strategies. Strategic planning, early stakeholder coordination, and transparent communication will be essential in overcoming the administrative and logistical challenges that previously undermined such efforts.

However, it is also crucial to acknowledge that hosting AFCON or any mega-event is not without challenges. Delays in infrastructure completion, issues related to governance and corruption, and lapses in coordination across tiers of government must be proactively addressed. In this regard, public-private partnerships, consistent policy implementation, and community engagement are recommended pathways for ensuring successful hosting experiences. Furthermore, increased collaboration between local authorities, the private sector, and international sports governing bodies will be indispensable to improving Nigeria's global sports image and enhancing its competitiveness in future bids.

In conclusion, this study affirms that Nigeria holds significant potential to host the Africa Cup of Nations and other mega sporting events. The convergence of infrastructure development, financial capacity, security readiness, and institutional frameworks positions the country as a serious contender in the African sports hosting arena. With strategic reforms, capacity building, and consistent political will, Nigeria can transform its passion for football into a socio-economic tool for national growth, regional influence, and global recognition. Thus, the findings of this study not only validate previous scholarly assertions but also serve as a call to action for policy makers, sports administrators, and stakeholders to build a sustainable and inclusive model for hosting major sports events in Nigeria. However, as noted by Osuoha, et al (2025) efforts aimed at protecting the environment from pollution should be activated by the organisers of mega events in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations have been provided:

1. Nigeria should invest in modernizing and expanding stadiums and training facilities to meet international standards required for hosting mega-events.
2. Improved road networks, airport facilities, and a wider range of quality accommodation options are essential to support large-scale tourist inflow during major events.
3. A robust, technology-driven security framework combined with effective emergency preparedness is critical to ensuring the safety of athletes, fans, and officials.
4. Hosting mega-events requires seamless collaboration between government ministries, security agencies, private stakeholders, and international sports bodies.
5. Reliable electricity supply and high-speed internet access across host cities are necessary to support event operations, media coverage, and fan engagement.
6. Training for event managers, volunteers, hospitality staff, and emergency responders is essential to enhance service delivery and event professionalism.
7. The government should encourage private sector investment in event infrastructure and services through policy incentives and clear regulatory frameworks.
8. A dedicated national body should be formed to plan, coordinate, and evaluate the feasibility of hosting future mega sporting events, including bidding processes and legacy planning.

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