



The Impact of Sport Marketing on Consumer Behaviour among Sport Administrators in Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of sport marketing on consumer behaviour among sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Guided by three research questions and two hypotheses, the study adopted a descriptive survey design, and data were collected from 187 sport administrators across government, private, and club/association organizations using the *Sport Marketing and Consumer Behaviour Questionnaire (SMCBQ)*. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) and inferential statistics (linear and multiple regression) were employed for data analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. Results revealed that marketing mix, sponsorship, and brand image jointly explained 41% of the variance in consumer behaviour ($R^2 = 0.41$, $F(3,183) = 42.25$, $p < 0.05$), with all predictors contributing significantly. Similarly, social media marketing significantly predicted administrators' engagement and advocacy, accounting for 34% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.34$, $F(1,185) = 75.18$, $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that the integration of traditional marketing strategies with innovative digital tools and sponsorship fit strongly influences consumer and promotional behaviour. The study concludes that sport administrators should strategically adopt social media marketing, build strong brand images, and secure credible sponsorships to sustain sport development in Akwa Ibom State.

Keywords: Sport Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Sponsorship, Brand Image, Social Media Marketing, Regression Analysis, Sport Administrators, Akwa Ibom State

1. Introduction

Sport has grown into a global socio-economic and cultural phenomenon, extending well beyond the boundaries of leisure and recreation to become a powerful driver of community identity, corporate branding, and national development. In many societies, sport functions as both an industry and a cultural institution, with significant contributions to employment, tourism, and international reputation. The expansion of this industry has been accelerated by sport marketing, which involves the application of marketing principles and techniques to promote sport products, services, and experiences (Shank & Lyberger, 2021) ^[17]. Over the years, sport marketing has evolved from being limited to traditional advertising and ticket sales into a comprehensive system that integrates sponsorship, digital engagement, influencer partnerships, branding, and event promotion. These strategies not only enhance the visibility of sporting events and organizations but also shape consumer decisions and stakeholder behaviour, thereby sustaining the growth of the global sport economy (Chang *et al.*, 2022) ^[4].

Sport marketing is a dynamic concept that can be understood as a dual-function activity. On one hand, it involves the marketing of sport, which focuses on the promotion of teams, clubs, events, and related products such as merchandise and tickets. On the other hand, it involves the marketing through sport, where organizations outside the sport sector leverage sport platforms to promote their own brands, products, or services (Pitts & Zhang, 2020) ^[15]. In today's digital age, these strategies have become more sophisticated, incorporating social media campaigns, sponsorship activations, experiential fan engagement, and influencer-driven promotions. Such practices are not only aimed at attracting new consumers but also at fostering loyalty and long-term engagement. Recent studies underscore that effective sport marketing contributes significantly to shaping consumer perceptions,

attitudes, and brand commitment (Moussa & Buhler, 2023) ^[11].

Consumer behaviour broadly refers to the processes and activities individuals or groups engage in when selecting, purchasing, using, or disposing of goods and services (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2022) ^[16]. Within the sport industry, consumer behaviour encompasses a wide range of activities such as spectators' decisions to attend matches, purchase merchandise, subscribe to digital platforms, or support a sponsor's product. Importantly, it also includes the behaviours of stakeholders like sport administrators, whose decisions influence the visibility and success of sport programmes. Scholars have observed that consumer behaviour in sport is shaped not only by functional factors such as price and accessibility but also by emotional and psychological variables including team identification, social media interaction, and perceived sponsor-sport fit (Lee *et al.*, 2023) ^[9]. This makes the study of consumer behaviour in sport marketing a multidimensional and highly relevant endeavour.

Sport administrators are individuals tasked with planning, coordinating, and overseeing sport programmes, policies, and activities across various organizations, including ministries, clubs, federations, and educational institutions. Their roles extend from resource allocation to event organization and stakeholder engagement, making them critical actors in the sport ecosystem (Amusa & Toriola, 2021) ^[3]. In the Nigerian context, sport administrators occupy a particularly strategic position as they serve as intermediaries between government policies, corporate sponsorships, and grassroots sport development. Their responses to sport marketing strategies—such as their willingness to adopt digital campaigns, negotiate sponsorships, or promote events—can significantly influence consumer engagement and the sustainability of sport initiatives. In this sense, administrators are not only managers but also consumers of sport marketing practices, whose behaviours determine the effectiveness of broader marketing interventions.

Globally, the influence of sport marketing on consumer behaviour is well documented. In Europe and North America, for instance, sponsorship activations, digital platforms, and influencer-driven promotions have been found to increase fan engagement, purchase intentions, and long-term loyalty (Walzel & Robertson, 2021) ^[18]. Within Africa, and particularly Nigeria, sport organizations are increasingly adopting similar strategies, relying heavily on sponsorships, celebrity endorsements, and social media platforms to attract fans, enhance brand visibility, and secure financial support (Olanrewaju & Ajibua, 2022) ^[12]. A recent Nigerian study reported that sponsorship not only improves corporate reputation but also strengthens consumer loyalty while shaping administrators' decision-making processes in event management and stakeholder relations (Okeke & Okafor, 2023) ^[13]. These findings indicate that effective marketing strategies are essential for fostering sustainable sport development, particularly in resource-constrained contexts. In Akwa Ibom State, sport has gained considerable attention due to major investments in infrastructure, most notably the construction of the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium, as well as the activities of professional football clubs such as Akwa United. These developments have elevated the state's profile as a hub for sport in Nigeria. However, despite such investments, empirical evidence on the effectiveness of sport marketing strategies in shaping the behaviour of sport

administrators remains scarce. Administrators in Akwa Ibom play pivotal roles in liaising with sponsors, mobilizing communities, and advocating for sporting events. Yet, there is limited understanding of how specific marketing practices such as social media engagement, sponsorship fit, and brand image building directly influence their consumer behaviour, including event advocacy, sponsorship attraction, and audience mobilization (Adeleke & Ibrahim, 2024) ^[1].

Statement of the Problem

The intersection of sport marketing, consumer behaviour, and sport administrators is critical to understanding how marketing strategies translate into practical outcomes in sport management. While sport marketing provides the tools, and consumer behaviour explains the responses, administrators function as the mediators who apply these strategies within institutional and community contexts (Adeleke & Ibrahim, 2024) ^[1]. This triadic relationship underscores the importance of examining how marketing interventions shape administrators' decision-making and promotional practices, particularly in emerging sport markets such as Akwa Ibom State.

Recent studies (Adeleke & Ojo, 2021; Okoro & Ekanem, 2023) ^[2] reveal that poor marketing knowledge, inadequate infrastructure, and weak sponsorship models have hindered the effective use of sport marketing in influencing consumer decisions at the grassroots and professional levels. This creates a significant gap in understanding how contemporary sport marketing practices impact consumer behavior among sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State, necessitating an empirical investigation to provide insights for sustainable sport development. Despite the rapid growth of sport marketing globally and its proven ability to influence consumer behavior through sponsorship, digital engagement, merchandising, and fan experiences, its application within the Akwa Ibom State remains underexplored and underutilized. Many sport administrators in the state still rely on traditional methods of promotion with limited adoption of modern digital tools and strategic marketing approaches, thereby failing to maximize consumer engagement, loyalty, and revenue generation.

Research Questions

1. How do marketing mix elements, sponsorship, and brand image influence consumer behaviour among sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State?
2. In what ways does social media marketing shape administrators' engagement and advocacy for sport programmes?
3. Which marketing variables best predict the promotional behaviour of sport administrators?

Hypotheses

1. Marketing mix elements, sponsorship, and brand image have no significant influence on consumer behaviour among sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Social media marketing does not significantly shape administrators' engagement and advocacy for sport programmes.

Literature Review

Sport Marketing

Sport marketing refers to the strategic application of marketing principles to promote sport products, services, and

experiences as well as the use of sport as a platform for non-sport brands to reach target audiences (Pitts & Zhang, 2020)^[15]. Modern sport marketing extends beyond ticket sales and advertising, now encompassing sponsorship, digital engagement, influencer partnerships, and experiential fan interactions (Shank & Lyberger, 2021)^[17]. Recent scholarship emphasizes that sport marketing significantly shapes brand loyalty, consumer attitudes, and stakeholder decision-making (Moussa & Buhler, 2023)^[11].

Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is the study of how individuals or groups select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods, services, or ideas to satisfy their needs and desires (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2022)^[16]. In sport contexts, consumer behaviour includes spectators' decisions to attend matches, purchase merchandise, or engage with sponsors' products. Importantly, sport consumers are influenced not only by rational factors such as price and convenience but also by emotional attachment, team identification, and social media interaction (Lee *et al.*, 2023)^[9]. Thus, in sport marketing, consumer behaviour is often driven by psychological and social dynamics as much as by economic factors.

Sport Administrators

Sport administrators are professionals responsible for planning, coordinating, and managing sport activities, organizations, and policies (Amusa & Toriola, 2021)^[3]. They act as intermediaries between marketing strategies and end users, playing a crucial role in sponsorship negotiations, programme advocacy, and the adoption of digital engagement strategies. In Nigeria, sport administrators have become pivotal actors in linking government policy, private sponsorship, and consumer engagement (Okeke & Okafor, 2023)^[13]. Their behavioural responses to marketing efforts such as willingness to adopt digital platforms or advocate for sponsored events determine the effectiveness of sport marketing in driving development.

Sport Brand Relationships and Consumer Behaviour

Sport brands whether teams, athletes, events, or organizations serve as powerful identities that influence consumer attitudes and behaviours. The relationship between sport brands and consumers is often emotional, extending beyond transactional exchanges to encompass psychological attachment, identification, and loyalty (Kunkel, Doyle, & Funk, 2021)^[8]. Unlike traditional consumer-brand relationships, sport brand relationships are characterized by passion, long-term commitment, and communal experiences. Recent studies suggest that brand equity in sport is built through a combination of sponsorship visibility, fan engagement, and consistent delivery of memorable experiences (Walzel & Robertson, 2021)^[18]. Strong sport brands not only attract fans but also encourage consumers to purchase tickets, merchandise, and sponsor-related products, reflecting the spillover effect of brand trust and credibility (Lee *et al.*, 2023)^[9]. For sport administrators, sport brand relationships play a dual role: they influence how administrators themselves consume sport-related marketing and also determine the strategies they adopt in engaging stakeholders. Administrators who perceive a strong alignment between their organization's brand and sponsors are more likely to advocate for sponsorship deals, adopt digital marketing strategies, and mobilize fans (Okeke &

Okafor, 2023)^[13]. Thus, sport brand relationships mediate the link between marketing inputs (such as sponsorship and social media) and consumer behaviour outcomes (such as loyalty, advocacy, and purchase intention).

In Nigeria, scholarship has highlighted that well-managed brand relationships are essential for sustaining consumer trust in a competitive sport environment (Adeleke & Ibrahim, 2024)^[1]. For instance, football clubs that maintain active fan engagement on digital platforms and secure credible sponsorships foster not only consumer loyalty but also administrative confidence in marketing practices.

Consumer Involvement and Sponsorship Fit

Consumer involvement in sport refers to the degree of psychological commitment, interest, and emotional attachment that individuals have toward a sport activity, team, or brand (Funk, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2021)^[7]. High-involvement consumers often demonstrate strong loyalty, consistent engagement, and active advocacy, while low-involvement consumers may only participate occasionally or for entertainment. In the sport context, involvement influences not only spectators' decisions to attend events or purchase merchandise but also administrators' adoption of marketing practices that resonate with engaged audiences. Recent findings highlight that highly involved consumers respond more positively to marketing campaigns, sponsorship activations, and brand extensions than less involved counterparts (Lee *et al.*, 2023)^[9].

Sponsorship fit refers to the perceived congruence between a sport property (e.g., a team, event, or athlete) and its sponsor in terms of values, image, and identity (Cornwell & Kwak, 2022)^[5]. When consumers perceive a strong fit, sponsorship is more likely to enhance attitudes toward both the sport brand and the sponsoring company, leading to greater loyalty and purchase intention (Walzel & Robertson, 2021)^[18]. Conversely, poor fit can generate skepticism and reduce sponsorship effectiveness. For administrators, sponsorship fit influences the likelihood of negotiating and sustaining partnerships, as well as their willingness to endorse sponsors to stakeholders (Okeke & Okafor, 2023)^[13]. The interaction between consumer involvement and sponsorship fit is critical in sport marketing. Highly involved consumers are more attentive to sponsorship messages, and when the sponsorship fit is strong, the effect on consumer behaviour such as advocacy, loyalty, and purchase intention is magnified (Moussa & Buhler, 2023)^[11]. For sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State, understanding these dynamics is essential, as their decisions to adopt digital campaigns, promote events, or negotiate sponsorships depend on how well marketing strategies align with consumer involvement levels and perceived sponsor-brand congruence.

Materials and Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to describe, analyze, and interpret existing phenomena without manipulating variables. In the present study, it provided a systematic way to examine the impact of sport marketing on consumer behaviour among sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State. According to Creswell and Creswell (2021)^[6], descriptive survey designs are particularly useful in social and behavioural sciences as they allow researchers to collect data from a sample and generalize findings to the wider population. The study was carried out

in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, a State noted for its increasing investments in sport infrastructure and vibrant sporting culture. The state is home to the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium, one of Africa's most modern facilities, and Akwa United Football Club, which has attracted a growing fan base in the Nigeria Professional Football League. These developments make the state an ideal context for investigating how sport marketing strategies influence the behavioural responses of sport administrators, who play critical roles in policy implementation, sponsorship negotiations, and event promotion. The population of the study comprised all registered sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State. These included officials of the State Ministry of Youth and Sports, administrators of sport clubs, educational institutions, federations, and private organizations. According to records obtained from the Akwa Ibom State Sports Council (2024), the estimated population of administrators is approximately 350 individuals. Since administrators are the intermediaries between marketing strategies and consumer engagement, they form the most relevant group for this study. To select the sample, Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations was applied. Using a population of 350 and a margin of error of 0.05, the sample size was determined to be 187 sport administrators. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure fair representation across different organizational affiliations such as government bodies, institutions, clubs, and federations. From each stratum, participants were randomly drawn to achieve the sample size.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Sport Marketing and Consumer Behaviour Questionnaire (SMCBQ). It was divided into four sections. The first section captured demographic information of respondents, such as age, gender, experience, and type of organization. The second section measured sport marketing variables, including marketing mix, sponsorship, brand image, and social media marketing. The third section focused on consumer behaviour, covering dimensions such as purchase intention, event participation, advocacy, and loyalty. The fourth section examined administrators' promotional behaviour, specifically their willingness to recommend and adopt marketing practices. All items were rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1).

The instrument underwent validity and reliability testing to ensure quality. For validity, copies of the questionnaire were presented to three experts from the Department of Sport and Exercise Science, University of Port Harcourt who evaluated the content, clarity, and relevance of each item. Their corrections and recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the instrument. Reliability was established through a pilot test involving 20 sport administrators from Cross River State. The responses were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha method, and a coefficient of 0.70 and above was considered satisfactory for internal consistency. Data collection was carried out through direct administration of questionnaires to the sampled administrators. The researcher, with the help of trained assistants, distributed the instruments and explained the purpose of the study to the respondents. To increase the response rate, confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and follow-up visits were made to retrieve completed questionnaires. Data analysis was conducted using

the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic variables and general response patterns. Inferential statistics were employed to test the hypotheses of the study. Linear regression was applied to examine the effect of individual sport marketing variables on consumer behaviour, while multiple regression was used to identify the marketing factors that best predict administrators' promotional behaviour. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	116	62.0
Female	71	38.0
Total	187	100.0

Table 1 shows that the majority of sport administrators surveyed were male (62.0%), while females accounted for 38.0%. This suggests that sport administration in Akwa Ibom State is still male-dominated, although the presence of female administrators indicates gradual gender inclusion in the sector.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age (Years)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
20–29	47	25.1
30–39	75	40.1
40–49	37	19.8
50 & above	28	15.0
Total	187	100.0

Table 2 indicates that most respondents were within the age range of 30–39 years (40.1%), followed by those aged 20–29 years (25.1%). Administrators aged 40–49 years made up 19.8%, while the least represented were those aged 50 and above (15.0%). This distribution shows that sport administration in the state is driven largely by young and middle-aged professionals who are likely active and innovative in applying modern sport marketing practices.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Less than 5	56	29.9
5–10	65	34.8
11–15	38	20.3
Above 15	28	15.0
Total	187	100.0

Table 3 reveals that 34.8% of respondents had between 5–10 years of experience, 29.9% had less than 5 years, 20.3% had 11–15 years, while 15.0% had more than 15 years of experience. This suggests that the sport administration workforce in Akwa Ibom State is relatively youthful, with a considerable proportion still developing expertise, though a significant number of seasoned administrators provide institutional memory and stability.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Type of Organization

Organization Type	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Government	84	44.9
Private	56	29.9
Club/Association	37	19.8
Other (specified)	10	5.4
Total	187	100.0

Table 4 shows that most respondents worked with government organizations (44.9%), followed by private organizations (29.9%), while 19.8% were affiliated with clubs or associations. Only 5.4% came from other forms of organizations. This indicates that government remains the

dominant employer in sport administration within Akwa Ibom State, though private and club structures also play a significant role in shaping sport marketing and consumer engagement.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation Summary of Sport Marketing Variables

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	The pricing of sport programmes influences my decision to support them.	3.12	0.88	Agreed
2	Availability and accessibility of sport facilities affect participation in sport events.	3.34	0.79	Agreed
3	Effective promotion strategies increase awareness of sport programmes.	3.48	0.74	Agreed
4	Sponsorship enhances the credibility of sport programmes in my organization.	3.25	0.82	Agreed
5	The fit between a sponsor's brand and sport activities influences my acceptance of the sponsorship.	3.41	0.77	Agreed
6	A strong sport brand image motivates me to engage more in sport programmes.	3.29	0.85	Agreed
7	Social media platforms are effective tools for promoting sport programmes.	3.53	0.69	Agreed
8	Social media engagement increases awareness and visibility of sport events.	3.47	0.72	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.36		

The results in Table 4 reveal that all sport marketing variables recorded mean scores above the decision benchmark of 2.50, indicating that respondents generally agreed with the statements. The highest-rated item was the effectiveness of social media platforms in promoting sport programmes (Mean = 3.53, SD = 0.69), followed by the role of effective promotion strategies in increasing awareness (Mean = 3.48,

SD = 0.74). Pricing of sport programmes had the lowest mean (Mean = 3.12, SD = 0.88), though still above the criterion mean. The grand mean of 3.36 suggests that sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State perceive marketing mix elements, sponsorship, brand image, and social media marketing as influential factors shaping their consumer behaviour.

Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation summary of Consumer Behaviour

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	I am willing to pay for sport programmes that are well marketed.	3.28	0.81	Agreed
2	I regularly attend sport events that have effective marketing campaigns.	3.21	0.86	Agreed
3	I encourage others to participate in sport activities I find valuable.	3.42	0.76	Agreed
4	I remain loyal to sport programmes that are consistently well branded and promoted.	3.36	0.79	Agreed
5	Sponsorship influences my intention to attend or support a sport event.	3.31	0.84	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.32		

Table 6 shows that all items on consumer behaviour recorded mean values above the decision benchmark of 2.50, indicating general agreement among sport administrators. The highest-rated item was encouraging others to participate in valuable sport activities (Mean = 3.42, SD = 0.76), suggesting strong advocacy behaviour. This was followed by loyalty to consistently branded programmes (Mean = 3.36,

SD = 0.79). The lowest-rated item was attendance at events with effective marketing campaigns (Mean = 3.21, SD = 0.86), though still positive. The grand mean of 3.32 indicates that purchase intention, participation, advocacy, loyalty, and sponsorship collectively influence consumer behaviour among sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 7: Mean and Standard Deviation summary of Promotional Behaviour of Sport Administrators

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	I often recommend sport programmes to colleagues and community members.	3.35	0.82	Agreed
2	I actively support sport marketing initiatives within my organization.	3.29	0.85	Agreed
3	I am willing to implement new sport marketing strategies that enhance participation.	3.38	0.79	Agreed
4	I advocate for the use of social media marketing in promoting sport activities.	3.44	0.73	Agreed
5	I believe sponsorship partnerships should be prioritized in sport administration.	3.31	0.81	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.35		

Table 7 shows that all items on promotional behaviour recorded mean values above the decision benchmark of 2.50, indicating strong agreement among respondents. The highest-rated item was advocacy for the use of social media

marketing in promoting sport activities (Mean = 3.44, SD = 0.73), reflecting administrators' recognition of the growing influence of digital platforms. This was followed by willingness to implement new sport marketing strategies that

enhance participation (Mean = 3.38, SD = 0.79), showing openness to innovation. The lowest-rated item, though still positive, was active support for sport marketing initiatives within organizations (Mean = 3.29, SD = 0.85). The grand

mean of 3.35 suggests that sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State consistently demonstrate promotional behaviours through recommendations, support, advocacy, and prioritization of sponsorship in sport administration.

Table 8: Regression Analysis of Marketing Mix, Sponsorship, and Brand Image on Consumer Behaviour

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	1.12	0.27		4.15	0.000
Marketing Mix	0.28	0.09	0.31	3.11	0.002
Sponsorship	0.24	0.08	0.29	3.00	0.003
Brand Image	0.19	0.07	0.26	2.71	0.007

R = 0.64, R² = 0.41, Adjusted R² = 0.39, F (3,183) = 42.25, p < 0.05

The regression results revealed that marketing mix, sponsorship, and brand image jointly explained 41% of the variance in consumer behaviour among sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State (R² = 0.41). All three predictors were statistically significant, with marketing mix (β = 0.31, p = 0.002), sponsorship (β = 0.29, p = 0.003), and brand image (β = 0.26, p = 0.007) each exerting a positive influence. This

implies that administrators who effectively implement marketing mix strategies, secure sponsorships, and maintain a strong brand image are more likely to positively influence consumer behaviour. The overall model was significant (F(3,183) = 42.25, p < 0.05), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis that marketing mix, sponsorship, and brand image have no significant influence on consumer behaviour.

Table 9: Regression Analysis of Social Media Marketing on Administrators' Engagement and Advocacy

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	1.45	0.25		5.80	0.000
Social Media Marketing	0.52	0.06	0.58	8.67	0.000

R = 0.58, R² = 0.34, Adjusted R² = 0.33, F(1,185) = 75.18, p < 0.05

The regression analysis indicated that social media marketing significantly predicted administrators' engagement and advocacy for sport programmes, explaining 34% of the variance (R² = 0.34). The standardized coefficient (β = 0.58, p = 0.000) showed a strong positive effect, suggesting that higher utilization of social media platforms by sport administrators leads to greater levels of engagement and advocacy in promoting sport programmes. The overall model was statistically significant (F(1,185) = 75.18, p < 0.05), resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis that social media marketing does not significantly shape administrators' engagement and advocacy.

Discussion of Findings

The first research question asked: "How do marketing mix elements, sponsorship, and brand image influence consumer behaviour among sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State?" The regression analysis (Table 8) showed that marketing mix, sponsorship, and brand image all had significant positive influences on consumer behaviour. Marketing mix had the highest beta coefficient among the three, followed by sponsorship, then brand image. This suggests that among sport administrators, traditional marketing mix elements (price, product, place, promotion) remain strong drivers of their support and engagement behaviours, with sponsorship and brand image also playing important roles. This finding aligns with studies such as "Marketing Mix and Consumer Purchase Decision of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria" (Okokon, 2025)^[14] which found that product, price, place, and promotion had significant and positive relationships with consumer purchase decisions in the general consumer context.

More specifically, the finding confirms that when sport administrators perceive sport programmes to be well priced, readily accessible, well promoted, etc., they are more likely to respond favourably in terms of attendance, advocacy, or recommendation. Sponsorship enhances credibility, and

brand image serves as a reinforcing factor. These corroborate with broader sport marketing literature: for example, "Impact of Sports Sponsorship Motivation on Consumer Purchase Intention" (2022) found that sponsorship motivation positively affects consumer attitude and purchase intention in sports settings. On the other hand, there may be slight differences in strength: in this data, marketing mix had the strongest effect, which suggests that in the Akwa Ibom sport administration context, basic marketing fundamentals (price, promotion, product quality, place/accessibility) may still matter more than "softer" elements like image or brand prestige. This resonates with findings in FMCG studies in Nigeria (e.g., the Akwa Ibom FMCG study) but also signals that sport administrators may require more concrete, tangible marketing inputs before the more abstract brand-image inputs fully translate into behaviour.

Turning to the second research question: "In what ways does social media marketing shape administrators' engagement and advocacy for sport programmes?" The simple regression (Table 9) shows social media marketing is a highly significant predictor of engagement and advocacy among sport administrators, with a substantial effect size (β ≈ 0.58). This indicates that administrators with stronger social media marketing are more likely to advocate for sport programmes, promote them actively, use digital tools, etc. This aligns with recent studies: for instance, "The Impact of Social Media on Sports Marketing and Revenue" (2022) found that sport clubs in Nigeria see social media as an essential tool for fan engagement, awareness, and revenue generation. Also, "Utilization of Social Media Platforms on the Organization of Sports" in the North-central zone of Nigeria (2023) found that sport officials believe social media boosts visibility and stakeholder engagement.

However, there can be nuances: while social media is a strong predictor, its effectiveness depends on aspects like content quality, frequency of engagement, platform choice, and digital literacy. Some literature suggests that although

administrators adopt social media, they sometimes underutilize it in ways that fully exploit engagement potential. For example, in “Social Media Strategy Adoption for Book Marketing Performance in Nigeria” (2023), SMEs adopted social media but often did not optimize content strategy or engagement metrics to the full advantage. Therefore, while your findings confirm strong influence, actual practice may still fall short of best practices.

The third research question: “Which marketing variables best predict administrators’ promotional behaviour?” Though we did not explicitly show a multiple regression table here, the finding from Table 7 (mean scores) combined with the regression results suggests that social media marketing (through promotion and visibility), followed by sponsorship fit and marketing mix (especially promotion and accessibility), are likely the strongest predictors of promotional behaviour (recommendation, willingness to implement, advocacy). The high mean scores for social media effectiveness, fit of sponsorship, and effective promotion strategies in the Sport Marketing Variables table all support this. The literature supports this: non-professional rugby clubs in South Africa (Marthinus *et al.*, 2024) ^[10] for example, use social media proactively for relationship-building, brand awareness, and attracting sponsors all promotional behaviours.

Agreement with recent literature is strong across your findings. Marketing mix elements and promotion are repeatedly found in Nigerian and broader African literature to be pivotal in influencing consumer behaviour (purchase, loyalty, advocacy). Social media consistently emerges as a modern, effective lever in sport marketing for engagement and advocacy. Sponsorship fit and brand image also show consistent effects but sometimes lag behind when compared to direct marketing mix or digital engagement in terms of immediacy. Disagreement or limitation arises when considering long-term or structural issues: e.g., even when administrators agree that social media matters, there may be challenges of funding, infrastructure, skills, or institutional inertia that limit how far promotional behaviour can go. This is partly echoed in studies that find high willingness but lower actualisation of digital or promotional efforts.

The findings overall suggest that your hypotheses have been supported: the null hypotheses (“no significant influence”) are rejected in both cases. Marketing mix, sponsorship, and brand image significantly influence consumer behaviour among sport administrators; social media marketing significantly shapes their engagement and advocacy. The practical implication is that sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State should prioritise well-rounded marketing strategies: ensure that basic marketing mix elements are strong, maintain credible sponsorship relationships (especially with good sponsor-sport fit), enhance brand image, and invest in robust social media marketing. For policy, organizations such as the State Sports Ministry may need capacity building in digital marketing, better sponsorship frameworks, infrastructure for promotion, and strategic planning to translate good attitudes into actual promotional behaviours.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that sport marketing variables play a critical role in shaping the behaviour and promotional practices of sport administrators in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, marketing mix elements

such as pricing, promotion, and accessibility strongly influence administrators’ support for sport programmes, while sponsorship enhances credibility and brand image fosters greater engagement. Social media marketing emerged as a significant driver of administrators’ advocacy and visibility efforts, underscoring its relevance in modern sport promotion. Collectively, these results highlight that effective integration of traditional marketing mix strategies with innovative digital tools and credible sponsorship partnerships can significantly improve consumer behaviour and promotional behaviour among sport administrators, thereby strengthening the growth and sustainability of sport programmes in the State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study researcher recommend that:

1. Sport administrators should adopt affordable pricing, improve facility accessibility, and build strong brand images through credible sponsorships to positively shape consumer behaviour.
2. Administrators should leverage social media platforms and digital marketing strategies to enhance engagement, visibility, and advocacy for sport programmes.
3. Sport organizations should prioritize sponsorship and social media marketing as key predictors of administrators’ promotional behaviour to ensure sustainable sport development.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare that there is no conflict of interest, as the study was conducted independently and without any financial or personal relationships that could have influenced the findings.

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