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Kontakt/Contact

ZBW – Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft/Leibniz Information Centre for Economics
Düsternbrooker Weg 120
24105 Kiel (Germany)
E-Mail: [rights\[at\]zbw.eu](mailto:rights[at]zbw.eu)
<https://www.zbw.eu/econis-archiv/>

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Profiling Attendees at a Major Women's Football Event in Cameroon

Frinwei Njihy Achu¹

Abstract: The aim of this study is to profile attendees at a major women's football event in Cameroon. The study is argued from the perspective that women's football events have been a neglected phenomenon within the African context, and that there is a need for giving such events attention. Previous studies with regard to major football events have been biased towards developed contexts, as well as towards men's events, while women's events have received little attention. The research employs an explorative quantitative research design. A structured survey was used to generate 759 valid responses from attendees at the Africa Women Cup of Nations tournament in Cameroon. The study found that the majority of attendees at women's football events are from the African region, travel in groups, usually stay at the destination for a relatively long time, and engage in post-event tourism activities. The results of the study have implications for the planning and development of major women football events, and contribute to the existing literature accordingly. The uniqueness of this paper lies in the researcher's intention to add value to the literature regarding major women's football events in the African context.

Keywords: attendee profiles; major sport events; women's football; Cameroon

JEL Classification: Z32

1. Introduction

Events and sports tourism have been identified as catalyst elements in marketing destinations. (Getz, 2013; Jiménez-Naranjo et al., 2016) The sport and events tourism phenomena have continued to command the experiences of travel to engage in, or view, sport-related activities as well as tourism related experiences at host destinations. (Getz, 2013) Many studies (Brancusi, 2013; Bob & Potgieter, 2013; Cornelissen, 2004; Fink et al., 2002; Getz, 2013; Gozalova et al., 2014; Hoye & Lillis, 2008; James & Ridinger, 2002; James & Ross, 2004; Nyikana et al., 2014; Pannenberg, 2010; Robinson et al., 2005; Tichaawa & Swart, 2010; Rinaldi, 2011) have been conducted with regards to sport tourism and major football events. However, despite the saturated and extensive literature in this regard, major women football events have been greatly neglected.

With football being the most sought-after sporting domain in Africa (Getz, 2003; 2010; Huggins, 2013), women's football has offered diversified preferences in relation to attendees' inclinations, while creating an exciting niche event for promoting not only gender in the sport, but also increasing host destinations' appeal as tourism regions (Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), 2017). This calls for a new dimension of presenting the sport of football to maintain huge spectator attendance and promote the sport tourism growth agenda in Africa. In addition, Weed (2006) establishes that diversified approaches to events and to a sporting domain like football would further resuscitate the power of events tourism to drive the tourism objectives of developing countries. According to Pannenberg (2010), the development of women's football is surprising, in the sense that

¹ University of KwaZulu Natal, School of Social Sciences, achufrinwei@gmail.com

the level of major women football events has improved vastly worldwide. However, without a strong support base with regards to the attendance and development by relevant stakeholders the sustainability of major women's football events in Africa would be compromised. (Pannenberg, 2010) Based on the above assertion, the sustainability threats to the women's football events in Africa calls for the need to profile attendees at a major women football event.

The objective of the study, therefore, was to profile attendees at a major women's football event in Cameroon. The twelfth edition of the Africa Women Cup of Nations, hosted in Cameroon in 2016, was used as a case study for achieving the objective of this study. The study was conducted with an aim of presenting an augmented/ new literature that is based on a major women's football event from an African perspective, and to explore various dimensions that might assist in developing such events as a way of achieving the overall tourism growth trajectory and sustainability in Africa. Focusing on Africa is essential, given the limited focus on major women's football events in the region. In addition, given the lack of conventional research in tourism studies that focus on major women's football events in Africa, the study could play a significant role towards contributing to the academic literature, as well as towards providing the required policy frameworks for developing such events.

To achieve the goal in question, the article is structured as follows: a brief literature review is presented next, followed by the methodology of the study. The study findings and discussion, followed by the implications and conclusion sections comprise the rest of the article.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, the research has widely confirmed that sport tourism events make an important contribution to the tourism industry and economy. (Getz, 2010) Therefore, profiling attendees is a prerequisite to ensure that destination managers will plan for future event activities, especially in terms of football events that attract large crowds of attendees. (Tichaawa et al., 2015; Wickramaratne & Kumari, 2016) According to Adetunji (2013), profiling attendees gives destination managers a descriptive account as to: what kind of football (match) is being planned for; what the scope and scale of its attendance is; how long it will last; and what its impacts and legacy implications for the host destination are. A football game, whether involving men or women, is embedded within the socio-cultural, economic and political aspects of sport and events tourism. (Adetunji, 2013; Cornelissen, 2004; Cornelissen et al., 2011; Swart & Bob, 2007; Tichaawa & Swart, 2010; UEFA, 2017) Thus destination authorities seek to attract and host such events as a way of accruing benefits for destination citizenry. (Cornelissen, 2004)

Jiménez-Naranjo et al. (2016) note that the intervention of destination authorities in an event, through the provision of resources, is the result of several decisions made by the political and administrative authorities involved, and it demonstrates the fact that the promotion of social events is above purely profit objectives. However, the involvement of the government in such events is not limited to promoting an activity taking place, but it also has various consequences for the area concerned, and whether the attendees are properly described to secure the proper planning and resources. Such consequences are difficult to quantify, since, in many cases, no data exist for their analysis, or they might even be intangible elements, as, for example, the environment. (Getz, 2003) Tichaawa and Swart (2010) and Swart (2005) believe that the synopsis provided by the events governing bodies, of football in particular, acts as a guiding principle for the establishment of social and economic policy. The public authorities concerned have, accordingly, to promote health education, physical education

and sports, as well as to encourage the proper use of leisure time by the attendees and event planners. In this regard, the authorities within the African continent must highlight the importance of women's football (Pannenberg, 2010), especially given that football is one of the greatest sports on the continent. (Tichaawa & Swart, 2010)

In the context of Cameroon, the country is known as an African giant in the sport (football) domain. (Tichaawa & Swart, 2010) Therefore, augmenting the sport by promoting major women's football through the profiling of attendees would contribute to development en route towards meeting the socio-economic agendas of the country. Women's football events could be established to appeal to tourists, as well as to the relevant sports communities or cultural groups who are stakeholders. (Pannenberg, 2010) According to Tichaawa and Swart (2010), football is, arguably, a high-profile sporting event that is used as a potential growth strategy, and as a means of achieving strategic corporate objectives. Cornelissen, Bob and Swart (2011, p. 115) refer to major football events as "complex affairs, which originate from a specific set of economic objectives, but which have political and social corollaries that usually extend far beyond'. In this regard, the women's football dimension helps in profiling sport event attendees, and potential tourists, thereby initiating and promoting tourism. It is, however, worth noting that compared to developed countries, the attractiveness of women's football and the emergence of women in sport events in Cameroon, and in Africa as a whole, is an underachievement. (Pannenberg, 2010) The claim is supported by the views of UEFA (2015), as the body believes that the game is at grassroots level in terms of its support base in Africa.

UEFA (2015) further indicates that women's football has always been viewed as an empowerment and gender-sensitive move by the proponents of the sport, with the aim of attracting women's participation as players and fans, stirring up human movements and incorporating its legacies in development agendas. Because football is a major sport (Tichaawa & Swart, 2010), it has the ability to draw a number of fans to the events and sporting grounds involved. Wickramaratne and Kumari (2016) advance that it is, therefore, important to profile the football fans so as to implement relevant strategies that can attract certain attendee segments. Proper attendee profiling, in this regard, can be explained in terms of the 4p's of marketing. (price, promotion, place and product) (Wickramaratne & Kumari, 2016)

Tourism governing bodies ushering sport and events tourism into Africa must react to the constitutional mandate of sport promotion, taking into account that the majority of the autonomous communities already have regulatory standards in place for sport. (Swart & Bob, 2007) As a result of such destination and attendees' profiles, sports events are appropriately justified by the government in host societies, combining sports promotion with leisure facilities for citizens. (Swart & Bob, 2007) The type of events that are offered by the government are a result of the decisions made by the authorities in accordance with the perceived demand in society, taking into account the budget constraints that affect them. (Jiménez-Naranjo et al., 2016) In addition, sports tourism through sports events can be considered as an alternative way of complementing the seasonality of tourism in a city, hence proper attendee profiling bridges the seasonality gap. (Getz, 2003) Promoting activities related to sports tourism can provide a number of resources to the tourism sector in areas where it is necessary to change the seasonality, and to enhance the sustainability, of the sector. (Jiménez-Naranjo et al., 2016) Therefore, it is necessary to analyse such events (women's football) in the areas where they are organised, with the aim of using the data for decision-making, the generation of the highest revenue, and proper future planning.

The hosting of sport tourism events requires considerable investment of human, financial and physical resources from the host communities. (Gibson, 2013) Thus, a lack of coordination and cohesion within the host community can turn the planning process into a highly charged political and social exercise, which might attract skills of negotiation and consensus-building from the immediate stakeholders. (Getz, 2010; Radicchi, 2013) Before submitting a bid for hosting, the organisers concerned design the profiles of attendees, so as to prompt public debate, and so as to promote community involvement, as well as a joint planning. (Gibson, 2013) The involvement of the host communities in major decision-making efforts continues to be questionable, despite the stakeholder group involved being hugely affected by the impacts that emanate from the hosting of sport tourism events. In a similar fashion, Nyikana et al. (2014) assert that the widespread support that sport tourism events attracts to host destinations is relatively high. The above crystallises the potential of women's football to augment tourism in Cameroon if the attendees' profiles are well understood.

Several scales and models have been developed to understand the motivations behind sport tourists as a subsector of the broader travelling population. (Cornelissen et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2005; Ross, 2001; Wilson, 2006) Such scales rest upon understanding the motives behind sport fans attending an event. The reasoning behind establishing a scale for attendee profiling is to identify the specific needs of women's football spectators, in such a way as to promote the attendance of those with specific needs at events. Milne and McDonald (1999) developed their Motivations of Sport Consumers scale to address the questions not considered by other marketing researchers, with their questions relating to the psychological needs that are satisfied by the consumption of a sport product, the motivations that divert the consumers away from other entertainment type towards sport, how the motivations of sport participants and sport spectatorship are similar or different, as well as how factors can be used to explain and predict consumption-related decision-making and behaviours. Milne and McDonald's (1999) scale suggests thirteen broad sport motivations: physical fitness, risk-taking, stress reduction, aggression, affiliation, social facilitation, self-esteem, competition, achievement, skill mastery, aesthetics, value development and self-actualisation. Scales and models help in attendee profiling based on the supporters' and the stakeholder group's specific needs. In other words, scaling, modelling and profiling the attendees provides an understanding of both the sport participants and sport spectators, so as to be able to market sport activities to them.

The 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup was the event that Funk et al. (2001) used as the basis for developing a scale for measuring the motivations of sport consumers unique to team sport events. They developed a scale and model to profile the attendees to measure the interest that spectators had in the aforementioned sport event. According to Funk et al. (2001), ten factors must be clearly described in relation to the fan stakeholder base. They consist of sport interest, vicarious achievement, excitement, team interest, the supporting of women's opportunities in sport, aesthetics, socialisation, the sense of national pride, drama and player interest. Their study showed that aesthetics, excitement, interest in soccer and the supporting of women's opportunities were important motives among fans supporting sport events. From the above, it would be feasible to form advertising campaigns and marketing strategies to attract spectators to upcoming women's football events in Cameroon.

3. Methodology

The targeted respondents in the current research were both the visitors and the local residents who attended the twelfth occurrence of the Africa Women Cup of Nations tournament in Cameroon in 2016. The event was hosted in two major cities of the country: Yaoundé and Limbe. A total of eight

teams (countries) played in the tournament, and sixteen games were played from 19 November to 3 December 2016, with the data collection being done on purposively selected days of the games. Employing an explorative quantitative research design, data were collected using a systematic random sampling technique. According to the procedure, every element in the population has the same probability of being selected, with, for example, one in every twenty people being selected. (Crossman, 2013; Welman & Kruger, 2001) Using the capacity of the stadia (42 500 for the Stade Ahmadou Ahidjo in Yaounde and 20 000 for the Limbe Omnisport Stadium in Limbe), the sample size was drawn using the sample calculation that was conceived for determining how large a randomly chosen sample from a given finite population of n cases should be, such that the sample proportion p would fall within .05 of the population proportion, meaning p with a 95% level of confidence. (Isaac & Michael, 1981) Consequently, the sample size was then determined at 759.

3.1. Data Collection and Analysis

A structured survey was used to generate a combined 759 valid responses from the attendees at both stadia (event venues) during the Africa Women Cup of Nations tournament. The fieldworkers selected to assist in the surveys had a good research background with regards to sport tourism, and they were provided with effective data collection training. In addition, the fieldworkers were able to communicate in both English and French, which facilitated approaching the attendees, no matter their language background. The surveys were then conducted on a face-to-face basis with the respondents at the entry/ exit points of the stadia, so as to ensure that the surveyed population was representative of the entire population of attendees. On the day of the game, the fieldworkers randomly selected the first respondent, and, thereafter, every twentieth attendee who passed them after a survey was completed was approached to participate in the study. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of the research objective, with the questions involved mainly relating to the profiles of the major women's football event attendees, so as to acquire valid and reliable results that could be analysed and synthesised with regards to providing the relevant implications, where necessary, in relation to the study. Key variables that were included in the survey included the respondents' gender, age, level of education, occupation, residency, type of visitor, group composition, length of stay and other activities engaged in.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, Version 24, was employed in analysing the data generated. The use of such software allowed for the conducting descriptive analyses to generate tables that assisted in presenting the findings that are given in the next subsection of the paper. More importantly, the SPSS software was pivotal in analysing the generated data to determine the significance and implications of the study findings made.

4. Findings and Discussion

The current study sought to profile a major women's football event attendees in an African context. The attendees' profiles were determined through: (1) the measurement of five key demographic variables (gender, age, level of education, occupation and residency); (2) the type of visitor; (3) the group composition; (4) the length of stay; and (5) other activities which attendees engaged in linked to attending the match.

4.1. Gender

Gender has always been a neglected variable in terms of sport tourism and events. The study found the majority of the respondents to be men (65%) compared to women (35%). The finding was

expected, as football is “widely considered a male dominated sport”. (Bama & Tichaawa, 2015, p. 210) The finding advocates the need for increased participation of women at major women’s sporting events by the relevant sport event owners and organisers. The above-mentioned finding could imply that women in Africa are yet to be exposed to sport events, which calls for the increased marketing of women’s football events that might trigger them to want to watch other women participating in a “male-dominated event”, and, hence, to attend such an event. (Bama & Tichaawa, 2015, p. 210) This implies that the increased attendance of women at major football events might be influenced by the increased marketing of major women’s football events that might create excitement among potential women attendees that they would want to attend such events. The above could also mean that the promotion of major female-dominated football events could be more appealing to the male attendees, as they seek new football event experiences.

Table 1. Respondents’ gender (n= 759, in %)

Gender	
Male	65
Female	35

4.2. Age

- The age profile of sport tourists has a great influence on their demand for tourism products during sports events, as well as influencing the destination marketing efforts. The respondents were found to be mostly youthful, with the majority (83%) ranging between 18 and 44 years old. The result is consistent with those of Pannenberg (2010) and Wilson (2006), who assert that sport events are mostly attractive to young to middle-aged groups. From a broader tourism perspective, the age of a tourist is known to be a prime motivator for their type of demand and spending patterns. Accordingly, the destination planners need to take cognisance of the tourist markets’ age group, so as to implement relevant strategies to meet their needs and expectations. In terms of considering major women’s football events as a growing phenomenon from an African perspective, the profiling of the age of such events’ attendees could be seen as being key to understanding the nature of the attendees and their expectations during the events. The findings of the study also indicate that the major women’s football events attract similar age groups to those attracted by the major men’s football events.

Table 2. Respondents’ age group (n= 759, in %)

Age group	
18-24 years	21
25-34 years	35
35-44 years	27
45-54 years	11
55-64 years	1
65-74 years	4

4.3. Level of Education

The level of education of a sport tourist is an important demographic variable that is related to the tourists’ level of event loyalty and spending patterns expressed during the event. In addition, Bama and Tichaawa (2015) indicate that understanding the sport event attendees’ level of education allows for understanding how they view important aspects of such events, and, in the case of the current study, their motives for attending a major women’s football event. Interestingly, 41% of the respondents had either completed an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification, while a further 20% had completed a certificate/ diploma. The high educational level of the respondents shows the ability of major women’s football events to attract educated attendees.

Table 3. Respondents' level of education

Level of education	
No formal education	1
Primary schooling completed	4
Secondary schooling completed	17
High schooling completed	17
Certificate/diploma completed	20
Undergraduate degree	21
Postgraduate degree	20

4.4. Occupation

Profiling the occupation of event attendees is considered crucial for event planners, because it gives a clear picture of the attendees' ability to afford to attend such events, as well as their resource usability during the event. Attendees who are employed tend to be more environmentally sensitive, and to act more responsibly in relation to the relevant event, compared to those who are unemployed. (James & Ross, 2004) In the study, a notable 71% of the respondents indicated that they were either employed, business people or professionals. Only 9% of the respondents indicated that they were not employed during the time of the survey, while 19% were either students/scholars or retired. The result indicates that major women's football events have great appeal among those who are employed. This could also mean that the employed can afford the ticket prices to major football events.

Table 4. Respondents' occupation

Occupation	
Student/ scholar	16
Retired	3
Sales/ marketing	14
Unemployed	9
Administrator/ manager	15
Business person	20
Artisan technician	11
Professional	11

4.5. Residency

Understanding the event attendees' residency is important in analysing the extent of the related marketing efforts with regards to geographic scope. Of the attendees who were surveyed, 67% were found to be Cameroonians, compared to 33%, who were foreign nationals. With 31% of the respondents originating from within the African continent, the results indicate a growing interest from the residents of Africa to attend major women's events. It was, however, worrying to find out that only 2% of the respondents originated from Europe. The above indicates either a lack of interest on the part of Europeans to attend major women's football events in Africa, or, which is more likely than the former, limited marketing efforts to target such markets. The result also calls for a new focus with regards to the profiling of major sport event attendees, as it does not agree with the findings made in previous studies by Bama and Tichaawa (2015) as well as by Tichaawa and Harilal (2016) that indicate that apart from the majority of major sport events attendees originating from the host country in Africa, most of the other attendees originated from outside the continent. The assertion is problematic, especially in the light of how under-researched certain sport events are with a bias towards men's mega events, especially in the case of football. The impression given by the findings in the current study is that major women's football events in Africa hold considerable potential for growth in terms of attendance from a wider geographic scope, as well as in terms of their development and promotion. This implies that such events have the potential to attract many attendees

from both within and outside the continent of Africa, if the marketing efforts of the event organisers and planners are implemented to target potential attendees.

Table 5. Respondents' residency (n= 759, in %)

Residency	
Cameroon	67
Africa	31
Europe	2

4.6. Type of Visitor

The respondents were also asked to indicate the type of attendees that they were. Surprisingly, the minority (22%) of the respondents indicated that they were residents of the area where the event was taking place. The results refutes assertions from Rinaldi (2011), who indicates that major events tend to be mostly attended by the locals of the host area than elsewhere. However, as the results show, the above could be different with regard to women's football events in an African context. This could suggest limited local support of women's football. This could also be seen in a positive light, especially considering that 67% of the respondents were Cameroonians, indicating that the event was well supported in the country and attracted visitors from other parts of the country to visit the match location. The result illuminates an aspect of being willing to travel to another city or area to attend an event. The implication of the result could be that people are more interested in travelling to attend a women's football event in another area, which is indicative of the promotion of domestic tourism. Interestingly, 55% of the respondents indicated that they were overnight visitors/ tourists, whereas only 23% were day trippers/ excursionists. From an economic impact perspective, the high proportion of visitors/ tourists implies that the destination cities benefitted economically from hosting the event. Irrespective of whether overnight visitors stayed with friends and relatives or in paid accommodation, overnight visitors have a higher average spend than any other category of attendees.

Table 6. Type of visitor (n= 759, in %)

Type of visitor	
Overnight visitor/tourist	55
Day tripper/excursionist	23
Local resident of area where the event is being hosted	22

4.7. Group Composition

To further understand the profile of the attendees, the respondents were asked to indicate their group composition during their visit. Hallman and Wicker (2015) highlight that sport events have a leading social motive, in terms of influencing people to travel/ attend events as couples, or as groups of friends and/ or family members. Hallman and Wicker (2015) further indicate that travelling as couples or groups to an event has an outstandingly positive impact on the spending patterns of the event attendees at the area where the event is hosted. Their assertion is echoed by the findings of the present study, which found that a notable 78% of the respondents travelled in groups, compared to 20% who travelled alone, with 2% not specifying their group composition. This indicates that, for the majority of the attendees, the event had a social component.

Table 7. Respondents' group composition (n= 759, in %)

Group composition	
Not applicable	20
Friends	34
Family	14
Friends and family	12
School group	5
Business associates	7
Tour group	6
Other	2

4.8. Length of Stay and Activities Engaged in

Various studies (Brancusi, 2013; James & Ross, 2004; Pannenberg, 2010) are of the view that the longer a tourist stays at a destination, the more they are likely to spend there. In relation to the above, the extended length of stay of event attendees in the host area translates into them becoming engaged in other post-event activities in. The present study found that 97% of the overnight visitor/tourist (n=417) spent more than a night at the destination or at least intended to do so. The above could be related to the fact that they were travelling in groups, encouraging them to engage in post-event social gatherings and activities.

Table 8. Respondents' length of stay (n= 417, in %)

Length of stay (number of nights)	
1	3
2-4	17
5-9	40
10-14	37
15 and more	3

To further profile the event attendees, the respondents were asked to indicate which secondary activities they engaged or intended to engage in. The above question was asked to find out the economic activities embarked on that might have contributed, or that did contribute, to the revenue generation involved in enhancing the host area's economy. Table 9 reflects that there was a high participant level in secondary activities by the event attendees with dining out (67%), shopping (65%), adventure activities (52%), sightseeing (58%) and visiting friends and relatives (50%) being the main activities identified. Therefore, major women's football events can be seen as having the potential to increase the levels of engagement in a myriad of touristic activities at the host destination, and to accumulate social and economic spin-offs that are tourism-related. The above calls for the increased marketing of African destinations as competitive tourism destinations for (sport) tourists, in terms of whom marketing efforts should include the promotion of a wide range of tourism products/activities that can be offered for consumption at the host destination. In relation to the current study, major women's football events can be used as a marketing tool for African destinations, with the relevant destination managers and planners needing to pay more attention to such events and their impacts. With regard to Cameroon, the findings of the current study show that the country, apart from having outstanding potential for hosting major sport events, could become a competitive African destination in relations to offering opportunities for nightlife and entertainment, shopping, adventure and sightseeing, as well as socio-cultural experiences for visiting tourists (especially sport tourists).

Table 9. Other activities engaged in (n= 759, in %)

Other activities in which engaged	
Dining	67
Shopping	65
Adventure	52
Sightseeing	58
Visiting friends and relatives (VFR)	50
Culture/ religion	39
Looking for investment opportunities	32
Entertainment (for example, nightlife/ movies)	50
Nature	40
None	7

5. Implications and Conclusions

The current study has shown that major women’s football events in Africa are being positively received in terms of attendance, despite being relatively neglected with regard to the literature and their development/promotion. The above calls for the importance of profiling attendees at such events, which is the focus of the present study. Profiling attendees at major women’s football events could be seen as being a first step in determining the typology of such events’ attendees, their expectations and their requirements during their visits to the host destinations. Determining the major women’s football event attendees’ profiles could assist the sport sector, together with destination planners/managers, at the host destination to be able to implement the relevant strategies. Such strategies could encourage an increased number of visits to the destination as well as paving the way to contribute to the sustainability of such events.

The fact that the profiling of attendees at sport-related events has gained increasing research attention in both developing and the developed contexts is undeniable. Most of these research outputs have, however, either focused on profiling the major football event attendees from a developed perspective or from a male-dominated football events context. The present study has, however, shown that major women’s football events are a growing phenomenon within the context of Africa, accumulating similar social and economic spin-offs as do men’s events in the same context. Considering that most of the major event attendees’ profiling in related studies (Bama & Tichaawa, 2015; Tichaawa & Harilal, 2016) has suggested that such events need to be developed and promoted as pinnacles for socio-economic transformation and for the establishment of the environmental well-being of the host destinations concerned, the present study is argued from the perspective that major women’s football events are no different in the above regard. Hence, a focus on the bidding for, and the hosting of, major women’s football events should be among the top tourism (mostly sport tourism) development priorities for developing countries.

The study also shows the growing interest of major women’s football attendees in travelling in groups, and in staying overnight, or for additional days, as well as in participating in other post-event tourism activities at the destination. The above could imply that major women’s football events have great potential for attracting tourist (mainly domestic) markets that are interested in staying longer than for just the event at a host destination, and in participating in a number of activities thereafter. There is, therefore, a need for the Cameroon tourism sector to consider its potential as a tourist destination that appeals to group travellers, as well as diversifying the sport tourism offerings made, as a way of encouraging an extended stay. There are implications for tourism developers/managers/planners generally, in terms of identifying and developing tourism products and

related activities in such a way that they increasingly appeal to the diversity of attendees. The evidence of Africans' interest in attending football events also surfaced in the current study. The above implies the need for promoting a gender-sensitive football culture among Africans, as a way of encouraging increased participation in attending major women's football events. The sport events planners/ managers need also to prioritise women-related events, and to give them as much attention as they do men's events. This is because the results in the present study have shown that women's football events bring similar socio-cultural and economic spin-offs to host destinations as do major men's football events.

Most of the respondents indicated that they were from Cameroon, the host country. More efficient strategies than in the past are required to promote the local support of major women's football events. On a different note, however, the study shows the limited attendance of international (outside Africa) attendees at major women's football events. The above could mean that there is little interest among people outside Africa to attend such events or that the marketing efforts of such events have not yet reached a wide enough geographic scope to attract people from other parts of the world. This could also be related to the costs of travelling to and in Africa, which is a major tourism constraint on the continent. Clearly, there is a need for the increased marketing of major women's football events to attract such international markets to the host destination.

The key argument presented in the current study is that the major women's football events have, in the past, been a neglected phenomenon in the literature on sport tourism development. This is despite the history that the events, especially the Africa Women Cup of Nations, have been in existence for a number of years, and that they have been accruing similar benefits (socio-cultural, economic and environmental) to those leveraged by the major male-dominated sport events. Regrettably so, little attention has yet been given to major women's football events by the relevant tourism authorities and sport/ event organisers with regard to their development and promotion, which has limited the extent to which such events have been able to contribute to the achievement of sustainability within an African context. The current research, therefore, sees the relevance of profiling attendees at a major women's football event, because profiling assists in: (1) segmenting women's sport event attendees, according to a number of attributes that might assist event planners and managers to understand their expectations and perceptions; (2) developing relevant policies and strategies that meet the needs of women's sport events attendees, not only during the event, but also afterwards, as tourists at a destination; (3) developing relevant marketing strategies that speak to a particular tourist segment; and (4) improving the competitiveness and the sustainability of regions, as the tourism products of the host regions are then capable of being designed in such a way that the types of (sport) tourists concerned are attracted to more than just the event itself, leading them to engage in a multiplicity of post-event activities, encouraging them to extend their stay and thereby enhance social and economic benefits.

The present study further proposes that major women's football events must be included in the plans and strategies that inform current sport tourism developmental frameworks, and the rethinking of the current growth trajectory of Africa's tourism sector. This research also acknowledges the plethora of studies that have focused on major football events in Africa, but, however, argues that such studies have been largely biased towards male events. In the light of the above, the present study has focussed on a women's major football event within the African context. The findings and arguments presented contribute towards complementing the academic literature with regard to major women's football events, especially in an African context. Major sports events like those of women's football tournaments can contribute not only to increased revenue, but also to modernise the local

infrastructure by means of building new accommodation and ancillary facilities within the host regions.

Future research in relation to football events should focus on the attendees' spending patterns in the host regions of such events, and on their level of interest in attending major women's football events. From a more theoretical perspective, given the lack of conventional research on tourism studies that focuses on the profiling of major women's football events in Africa, it is highly recommended that further studies consider the benefits provided by such events for the host regions from a more critical gender perspective. In addition, a thought-provoking research inquiry could be one that focuses on investigating the extent to which the policy and strategy designed for events of this nature has been successful. Furthermore, stakeholder engagement is a critical aspect of a major sport event that enhances and leverages the associated event opportunities to transform the communities involved. (Tichaawa & Harilal, 2016, p. 805) Therefore, conducting a study that focuses on stakeholder involvement/ views in developing and promoting major women's football events in Africa could be beneficial.

6. References

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