

The Need for a Sports Museum in Africa : The Case of Ghana.

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Abstract

The establishment of a sports museum is vital for preserving the rich history and heritage of sports, providing educational resources, celebrating achievements, fostering cultural unity, boosting the economy through tourism, promoting physical activity, supporting research and innovation, and engaging the community. Such a museum not only honours past and present sports heroes and heroines, but also inspires future generations, contributing to the overall development and cohesion of society. Using a case study approach, this paper explores the importance of establishing a dedicated sports museum in Africa, specifically Ghana. The study will delve into the reason for sports museums in the world, the need for a sports museum in Ghana, the current state of sports heritage preservation in Ghana, and further make some recommendations. This study argues that a national sports museum in Ghana is essential for preserving the legacy of sports heroes, promoting national identity, fostering tourism, and educating the youth on the transformative power of sports.

Keywords: Museum, Ghana, Sports, Document, Africa

Introduction

Historical records and archives relating to sports serve as a repository for information, news, artefacts and records. These take different forms and different designations including the terminology Sports Museum. This article affirms and makes the case for a sports museum and presents a guide for the establishment of a sports museum. The motivation for this paper emanates from the realization that sports museums are vital for preserving the rich history and heritage of sports, providing educational resources, celebrating achievements, fostering cultural unity, boosting the economy through tourism, promoting physical activity, supporting research and innovation, and engaging communities.

A sports museum not only honours past and present sports heroes but also inspires future generations, contributing to the overall development and cohesion of society (Phillips 2013, 14). This paper will explore the importance of establishing a sports museum in Ghana and further explore the reasons for establishing sports museums in many parts of the world.

Sports and sporting events, laurels, facilities, venues, championships, events and all that go along with sports come and go with diverse objects, artefacts, memorabilia and narratives with anecdotes behind the scenes beyond what we see projected in the media or at sporting events.

A sports museum can be described as an organization committed to gathering, preserving, interpreting, and showcasing objects, memorabilia, and records pertaining to the history and culture of sports (Phillips 2013, 1). A sports Museum thus preserves the rich history of sports, honours accomplishments, informs the public, and raises awareness of the value of sports in society. It therefore serves as an essential cultural organization that honors and conserves the legacy and history of sports. This is why sports museums become the outfit that serves an important role in inspiring future generations, promoting the value of sports in society, and fostering cultural and economic growth through their captivating displays, educational programs, and community events (Moore 2022, 4). They contain artifacts with permanent exhibitions that highlight the long-term history and growth of different sports, eminent athletes, and noteworthy events with cultural or historical value, like autographs, posters, and merchandising.

This observation has been confirmed variously including for instance, the fact that, the key components of a sports museum include the collection and preservation of artifacts such as sports equipment, jerseys, trophies, medals, and personal items belonging to athletes (Vamplew 1998, 270). Further confirmation of this is also reiterated when the observation is made that sports museums also consist of gathering old documents, images, recordings, and narratives that capture important occasions and turning points in the history of sports (Osmond, Gary, and Murray 2013, 58).

Sports Museum: A journey across the Globe

A lot of benefits emanate from the establishment of a sports museum. Just as we have in the normal trend of museums of varied purposes and descriptions, so is it also with sports museums. One very important aspect of sports museums is that of imparting knowledge, immortalizing information and knowledge, and passing it from one generation to the other (Specht, and Loreit 2021, 112). It is a source of learning, teaching and research for the layperson, historians, students, academics or researchers.

The teaching, learning, research and sharing of historical facts do not happen in isolation, but from collaborative efforts and actions. Given the fact that the content of sports museums is vast, broad and diverse, it becomes a multi-stakeholder and multi-dimensional undertaking and exercise. Indeed, sports museums are a source of teaching about the social, scientific, and historical dimensions of sports through workshops, lectures, and school trips (Ramshaw 2010, 48).

Sports museums are learning platforms where historians, academics, and students can all benefit from historical materials when studying sports history and its social effects (Phillips and Tinning 2011, 58). Once the information is gathered for the museum, it becomes a central location for publishing books, catalogues, and web content to encourage awareness of sports legacies and to spread information (Gordon 2022, 96).

Further to the above, learning and teaching and diverse capacity development can happen with the existence and establishment of a sports museum. This extends beyond all aspects to events like player panel discussions, autograph signings, and sports clinics which can be held inside the sports museum to include the local community and show

how sports are connected to politics, social change, and cultural identity (Moore 2008, 449).

Sports museums generally are not as common and widespread as sporting facilities. There are, however, a few which projects the thoughts and rationale, identity and simply celebration of history or phenomena. The National Football Museum of England, which focuses on the history and culture of football (soccer) in England and around the world, is one of the most renowned sports museums in the world (Moore 2021, 180). With its components being instructional activities, interactive exhibits, and sizable collections of football memorabilia, this museum serves as an impetus and motivation and basis for the establishment of a sports museum on the sports-crazy continent of Africa and country like Ghana. The Baseball Hall of Fame can be a source of motivation for young athletes and sports enthusiasts. Located in Cooperstown, New York, the Baseball Hall of Fame in the United States of America honours the game's greatest players and commemorates its history (Ramshaw, Gammon, and Tobar 2019, 81). Beyond this, the museum provides yearly induction ceremonies, historical records, and extensive exhibitions.

Need and Significance of a Sports Museum in Ghana

Sports have always been an integral part of Ghana's culture, identity, and national pride. From traditional games to global competitions, Ghana's sporting history is rich with achievements, iconic figures, and moments that have inspired generations.

Long before formalized sports, Ghanaians engaged in traditional games that tested strength, agility, and strategy. Games such as Ampe (a popular high-energy game played mostly by girls, involving clapping and jumping), Oware (A strategic board game that sharpened mental skills), Wrestling (Practiced in Northern Ghana, it was both a sport and a cultural rite of passage), and Hunting and Archery. These games weren't just for fun, they built community bonds and prepared youth for life's challenges.

The British colonial rule introduced modern sports, which Ghanaians quickly embraced and excelled in. The game of Football (Soccer) was introduced in the early 1900s, which later led to the establishment of local clubs like Hearts of Oak (1911) and Asante Kotoko (1935). Cricket and Boxing were among the early games introduced by the British colonial rule. Cricket was played among elites, while boxing became a working-class passion. Athletics was mainly practiced in schools and colleges.

After independence in 1957, sports became a tool for national unity and global recognition. Ghana first competed as an independent nation at the 1960 Rome Olympics, sending seven athletes. Though no medals were won, it was a historic moment that indicated Ghana's readiness on the world stage. In 1963 African Cup of Nations (AFCON), Ghana's Black Stars won the first continental trophy. And in 1964, Ghana's U-23 team made history in Tokyo by winning Olympic Football Bronze.

Between 1972 – 2000, Ghana dominated Olympic boxing and produced legends such as Prince Amartey, Joey Olayinka, Azumah Nelson, Ike Quartey and Joshua Clottey. In Athletics, Alice Anum, Myles Mills, Vida Anim, Margaret Simpson, Ignisious Gaisah and others put Ghana on the global track map. In football, Ghana has produced several world legends such as Abede Ayew, Tony Yeboah, Karim Abdul Razak, Asamoah Gyan, Michael Essien, Stephen Appiah, Samuel Osei Kuffour, and Sulley Muntari. Ghana's football legends paved the way for African talent in Europe, inspiring generations. From Abedi Pele's flair

to Essien's dominance and Gyan's World Cup heroics, they remain icons of the game. Sports remain a beacon of hope for Ghanaian youth, from grassroots to global stages.

Ghana needs to create a sports museum to protect its rich sporting history, inform the people, foster pride in the country, motivate the future generation, and advance economic growth. The museum would have a significant impact on how sports are shaped in Ghana by honoring the nation's sporting accomplishments and promoting a culture of involvement and quality. This establishment would serve as both a reminder of Ghana's recent and historical sporting achievements and a source of inspiration.

Historical documents, artifacts, and memorabilia related to sports are best preserved and instrumentalized when stored in a sports museum (Manzenreiter and Horne 2011, 550). This aids in maintaining the legacy of athletes and occasions that have influenced the development of sports in a nation. Sports, which forms the core of sports museums, is thus a vital component of cultural legacy (Thomson, et al. 2019, 301). Their contribution to the documentation and celebration of sports history highlights societal shifts and cultural variety from the lens of sports and sporting activity. This will be an enormous achievement and contribution to the manifestation of the frontiers of sports in the country.

A sports museum provides educational resources for the public, researchers, and students (Black, 2012, 23). Collaborating with academic institutions, museums promote studies in sports history and science, aiding the development of training regimens and technological advancements. This enhances teaching, learning, and research in Ghana. Schools benefit from the museum's educational programs, workshops, and guided tours, teaching children about sports history, science, and physical activity. Academics and historians gain invaluable resources for researching the development of sports and their societal impacts (Stark 2019, 33). Additionally, displays on the benefits of athletics and physical exercise can raise public awareness of fitness and health issues, inspiring Ghanaians to lead more active lives.

The content of sports museum also deals with mainstream sports as they provide understanding of the sociology, science, and history of sports in communities (Phillips 2012, 50; Snyder 1991, 234). Younger generations in Ghana will be offered role models when the accomplishments of successful athletes are highlighted. This will inspire them to pursue success in sports and other undertakings.

A well-designed sports museum, therefore, has the potential to attract both domestic and foreign visitors. The visits contribute to the economy and jobs by offering tourist possibilities making the local Ghanaian economy benefit as more money is spent by tourists on lodging, dining, and other services. This is because sports museums are a clearing and reference point, and they could serve as the gathering place for individuals to commemorate common accomplishments and experiences (Kotler and Kotler 2007, 320). Special events, exhibitions, and interactive programs can therefore generate additional revenue. In this case, the establishment and operation of a museum therefore create jobs and can stimulate local businesses (Engelbrecht 2013, 6). Jobs creation, administration, education, and hospitality would all be generated by the construction and running of a sports museum in Ghana.

The museum has the potential to become a popular tourist destination (ShawHong 2020, 152), bringing in tourists from all over the world to see Ghanaian sports tradition and culture. It would promote cross-cultural interaction and educate tourists about Ghana's distinctive sports customs and their significance to the country's past. Sports

museums can be vibrant hub for neighborhood events and activities (Ocampo and Lersch 2010, 148), and the organization of sports clinics and youth development initiatives.

On the professional and occupational fronts, young people may be encouraged to pursue jobs in the sports sector by learning about the different career options in sports, such as coaching, sports medicine, and management (Plaza, Galvez-Galvez, and Gonzalez-Flores 2011, 224). Ghanaian athletes' global influence and international accomplishments would be highlighted in a sports museum in order to increase the country's stature and recognition abroad.

It has been mentioned that research and studies on sports history are very rare and isolated (Nauright 2012, 946) and so the establishment of such a museum will play a significant role for further discourse and dialogue in sports history and narratives in Ghana.

Current state of Sports Heritage Preservation in Ghana

There are many opportunities as well as obstacles in Ghana and Africa when it comes to preserving sporting heritage, but the observation is that there are not as many sports museums in Africa as there are in Europe or North America (Kros 2018, 219). Even though there seems to be a realisation of the importance of a sports museum, action has not matched the potential benefits and the rhetoric.

Even though one cannot pinpoint exclusivity in terms of sports museums existing in the country, there are examples of attempts, albeit limited, private, exclusive and small-scale, to archive and preserve sports history and memorabilia. For instance, individuals, organizations, clubs and teams as well as educational institutions and sports governing bodies have collections pertaining to the history of sports. These archives might not be open to the public, yet they frequently include priceless records, pictures, and souvenirs that would enrich sports museums and the purpose for which sports museums are set up. Clearly, these often miss the opportunity to be explored on a national and broader scale.

For instance, it has been established that sports-related records can be found at the national archives and libraries of several African nations (Lim, and Aman 2015, 7; Taylor, Skillen, and Roberts 2022, 531) but are lost in the repertoire of items. All these reduce the effect and potential for such a localization of materials that fit into a sports museum. That explains why national sports federations and associations are frequently in possession of documents and artifacts pertaining to the sports in question (Inglis 2015, 68).

There is also a huge gap in the investment towards the establishment of a sports museum in Ghana and many African countries due to perennial financial matters. Even where the realization exists of the importance of a sports museum, the lack of funds and resources is a major obstacle to Africa's sports history preservation (Kros 2018, 220). Given the limited nature of resources available for other issues in the social, economic, education, health etc. areas, many African nations place more importance on pressing social and economic problems than on preserving their cultural history, which leads to a lack of funding for archives and museums (Crawford 2006, 248). Funding for a museum, which in itself is not a sustainable profit-making outfit can be very expensive, encompassing and demanding. For instance, there is frequently a dearth of the infrastructure needed to preserve historical items, such as conservation facilities and climate-controlled storage, the absence of which may cause priceless sports artifacts and records to deteriorate.

Other issues that prevent the existence and establishment of a sports museum in Ghana are the lack of awareness and knowledge of the need for and importance of sports museum (Stark, 2019, 233).

Proposed Model of a Sports Museum for Ghana

Creating a sports museum in Ghana is a great way to celebrate the country's rich sports heritage and inspire future generations. The following proposed model is a guide in establishing a museum in Ghana:

- i. Clearly define the museum's mission, focusing on the history of traditional and modern sports, iconic athletes, major sporting events, and sports' impact on African society and culture.
- ii. Choose an accessible major city (such as Kumasi, or Accra) with significant foot traffic, known for its vibrant sports culture and tourism potential.
- iii. Partner with local governments and sports organizations to secure a prime location and support.
- iv. Collect and display historical sports artifacts, including jerseys, equipment, medals, and photographs.
- v. Incorporate interactive displays like virtual reality experiences, sports simulators, and multimedia presentations. Create a digital archive of African sports history and a museum app with interactive features and virtual tours.
- vi. Dedicate a section to honor legendary Ghanaian and African sports figures and their achievements.
- vii. Showcase traditional Ghanaian and African sports and games, highlighting their cultural significance and evolution.
- viii. Develop educational programs, workshops, and guided tours for schools and community groups. Host events, lectures, and sports clinics.
- ix. Partner with national and international sports organizations, federations, and clubs. Engage athletes to contribute memorabilia and participate in events.
- x. Seek sponsorships from corporations in the sports industry.
- xi. Use social media to promote the museum, share stories, and engage with the community.

Conclusion

A Sports Museum in Africa, specifically in Ghana, would serve as a monumental tribute to the continent's rich and diverse sports heritage. This institution would not only celebrate the achievements of African athletes but also preserve and promote the cultural significance of sports in the region. Ghana, with its vibrant sports culture and history, is an ideal location for such a museum. A Sports Museum in Ghana would be a significant cultural, educational, and economic asset. It would celebrate and preserve the country's sports heritage, inspire future generations, and promote national pride. By leveraging technology, fostering collaborations, and engaging the community, this museum can become a cornerstone of Ghanaian culture and a beacon for African sports heritage.

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