

## Sport, Branding From Nation-Building To Nation Branding

Sport, Du Construction Nationale A L'image De Marque Nationale « Nation Branding ».

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## Abstract

This paper seeks to give insights to the idea of sport nation branding, the idea of promoting the image of a nation through the use of sports. It then looks at the development of sports in the political framework, whereby the use of sports in unifying nations and extra political power is explored. The study provides an insight into the effects of cultural imperialism and decolonization through the global practice of different sporting events Using examples such as the United States and its involvement in the Olympics, Brazil and Football, Qatar and the FIFA world cup, and Morocco as a study, the study tells a tale of two halves in as much as the sporting activity is concerned. The paper also discusses the current model of nation branding which uses sports for the purpose of presentation of nation to the world, selling the nation and instilling the confidence in the other nations to invest in the nation. The study reveals the relevance of sports in the construction of a country's image and the opportunity of states to effectively utilize this provincially influential sphere for their benefit.

**Keywords:** Nation Branding, National identity, Economical Framework, Political Framework, National Image, Investment, International Recognition, Sport, Morocco.

## Résumé

Dans cet article, il est question du « sport nation branding », une idée selon laquelle le sport peut et doit être utilisé pour construire et promouvoir l'identité d'une nation dans le monde. L'article examine comment, tout au long de l'histoire, le sport a été un instrument de la politique nationale et internationale, en termes de cohésion sociale et de pouvoir d'influence. L'étude choisit des exemples tels que les États-Unis, le Brésil, le Qatar et le Maroc comme étude de Cas. Le sport y est présenté comme un moyen de domination culturelle tout en étant aussi une façon de se libérer. L'article aborde également la modernité du « nation branding » ou du brassage sportif, destiné à mettre en avant l'identité nationale pour attirer les investissements et la reconnaissance internationale. Les conclusions démontrent le rôle central du sport dans la construction de l'image d'une nation et le pouvoir stratégique que les pays peuvent tirer de cet outil influent.

**Mots-clés :** Image de Marque Nationale, Identité nationale, Cadre Economique, Cadre Politique, Image Nationale, Investissement, Reconnaissance Internationale, Sport, Maroc.

## **Introduction:**

Sport has undoubtedly emerged as an important variable of politics in the centuries, as well as in the national and international currents. Traditionally, integration and identification uses sports mostly in nation building as a key element to consolidate the people hence boosting their patriotism. This has progressed to a newer level where the utilization of sports in re-branding nations or in improving the standing of the country in the international system is quite common. It will be of interest to note the efforts made by various countries in the development of sporting activities. By nineteenth and twentieth centuries European especially the British empire employed sport as tool to colonize the colonial territories. Sometimes referred to as “sportification,” this means that the British used a set of norms and structured rivalry to prevail over other cultures. However, this diffusion of sport was not unidirectional or one way traffic rather complex and dynamic process. Such sports were embraced by the colonial powers though the colonized populations changed and even distorted the concept for their need to actively constitute themselves as distinct entities than accept the colonial rule, an aspect that demonstrates the two facets of sporting exercise, namely as agents of domination as well as emancipation.

While going to the modern stage, the application of sport as a political tool also assumed a rather refined character. First, the 20th century witnessed the application of sports diplomacy where games were used to nurture diplomatic relations for serving national interests. Some examples are; The use of ping-pong diplomacy that saw the U.S and China get to give the other country a friendly gesture in the 70s that helped to pave way to diplomatic relation between the two nations. In the same way, during the cold war the United States used Olympics to show that The United States and the Soviet Union also employed to show their political dominance. Nowadays, there is something like nation branding, which is rooted in marketing and aims at selling an image of a given country on the international level. Sports bare perhaps the most important strategic components of this process, as they embody a versatile and effective communication medium that can portray a nation’s high ideals and accomplishments. This has been done effectively by countries such as the United States of America, Brazil and Qatar among others, who have used sports to market their countries’ brand to the world, create brand awareness thus boosting tourism, investment among other benefits they derive.

From the case of Morocco, it is clear that the country has used sports to gain recognition as an economic and political power on the international scene. Morocco is aspiring to be on the map of global sports powers with revamped efforts such as hosting larger sports events and other

purposes for development of sports facilities and athletes training. They do this, as does the country generally, to promote the nation's image and establish itself as a power to be reckoned with on the global level.

Sport has been used as a medium of uniting people and even as a propaganda tool to sell a country's image to the world. This paper seeks to discuss how sports has evolved from being a source of unifying people into a modern tool of promoting a nation's brand on the global market. From past to present it seeks to analyze how a political and social facet of sports, such as nationalism, can develop, and transform. It also serves to bring out the role of sports in influencing perception of a nation and the capability of nations to appropriately apply this force multiplier for the benefit of the country.

### **Methodological approach:**

In this work, the author uses qualitative research on the discussed subjects and relies on the examination of the sources of literature devoted to sports diplomacy and nation branding. Such an approach assists in pinpointing broad tendencies and defining major aspects concerning the contribution of sports towards the formation of the national identity and the international image. In the course of analysis, it is stated that sports are used in constructing a nation, its identity and other states can utilize this sphere to enhance global recognition and global capital. In conclusion, the paper focuses on the role of sport in the image building process of any nation and the economic and political aspects that come with such.

### **1. SPORT, BRANDING FROM NATION-BUILDING TO NATION BRANDING**

"It is more important to be known to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) than to the United Nations," In 2010, Hamad Ben-Khalifa Al-Thani, then Emir of Qatar, made this statement. Over a century before, the Reverend J.E.C. Welldon, who served as headmaster of Harrow School from 1881 to 1895, proclaimed that "the history of the British Empire records that "it is written in the history of the British Empire that it is to its sports that England owes its sovereignty." These two quotes, with their chronological markers, attest to the close relationship between sport and politics, particularly as it developed throughout the twentieth century. The DNA of this relationship has been built around two main strands: the use of sport for national cohesion, which corresponds to the theory of nation- building, and its use for international influence, which refers to the concept of nation-branding. This chapter will focus on this dual political function of sport, examining its evolution in line with the growing interest that public authorities have taken in it, particularly thanks to its attributes in terms of mobilization and communication.

### **1.1 Sport and national appropriations, beyond colonialism and imperialism**

According to Larousse, sport is "the set of physical exercises that take the form of individual or collective games, generally giving rise to competition, practiced in accordance with certain rules." Beyond this common and timeless definition, one may wonder about the origin of sport.

Sport has evolved a lot. It continues and will continue to do so. Modern sport is a relatively recent concept that dates from the late 18th/19th century. At that time, the word itself was not very well known. It gradually became popularized before developing in the 20th century, particularly with organized sport." (Chappelet, interview 2019).

The attempts at answers provided by historians so far fall into two main approaches. "On the one hand, there is the theory of permanence, which holds that sport belongs to the sphere of play, of which it is the continuation. As such, it has always existed. On the other hand, the proponents of the theory of rupture, who are more numerous and more influential, argue that modern sport is radically different from the physical activities that preceded it. Because it is the result of the advent of industrial society, contemporary sport offers its own specific, constructed temporality." (Turcot, 2016, 12).

A temporality in which the diffusion of sporting practices and its participation in a more generalized process of globalization occupy a particular place.

Thus, "many contemporary observers consider that the diffusion of modern sports throughout the world is a sign of the emergence of a post-modern global culture that transcends the nationalist forces that have often Balkanized the modern era." (Dyreson, 2003, 91).

Many studies see in this new universal language that is sport the emergence of a harmonious global culture. They identify it as having the potential to transcend not only territorial borders, but also national identities.

In the same vein, the German research group Ommo Grupe (1991) postulates that sport offers the world's diverse populations "a universally understandable language, symbols and rules."

Responding from the same perspective, LaFeber, a historian of imperialism, chose in 2002 to deliver his reading of the challenges of the 21st century in a book entitled "Michael Jordan and The New Global Capitalism." In it, he describes the NBA star as being, at the time, "without doubt, the most recognized and glorified person on the planet." LaFeber points out that Chinese students have chosen Michael Jordan and Zhou Enlai (first Premier of the People's Republic of China, in office from October 1949 to January 1976, under Mao Zedong) as the two most important figures in contemporary history. An image already present, two years earlier, in an

issue of National Geographic magazine on the theme of "Global Culture." We can see a tournament between young Shaghainese playing basketball on a panel decorated with photos of Michael Jordan. The Nike representative who organized the event summed up this freeze-frame with the following formula: "The most famous man in China, who has never been to China."

While these academic or professional assertions about the universalism of sport are true, they fail to shed light on a more complex historical path. Mangan (1992, 6-9) indicates that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, sport simultaneously and paradoxically acted as both an "imperialist umbilical cord" linking the different cultures of the territories covered by the Kingdom and a "tool of cultural resistance" on the part of the colonized populations. From there, it is important to look at these two aspects.

### **1.2 Sport, between cultural domination and emancipation**

In the 19th century, Great Britain was a powerful global empire that relied on sport, among other things, to extend its political, economic, and cultural domination. To this end, it proposed "a new model of 'sportification' which would lead to a major movement of definition of sport that would affect the whole of the European continent, the Americas, the colonies and soon the whole planet" (Turcot, 2016, 456). This was made possible by a number of factors, the main ones being, according to Ravenel (2011, 202-203), whose explanations we reproduce here, the following:

- ❖ **Standardization:** "The codification of the rules has gradually fixed the properties of the game and facilitated its adoption even if, in the early days, there were still doubts about how to play. Spatial and temporal boundaries have undergone the same process with a standardization of playing areas and the duration of events. This standardization was a necessary condition for the national and then international diffusion of sport."
- ❖ **Differentiation:** "On the social level, this transition took place in an ambiguous way. While traditional games mixed population groups, modern sport accentuated the differences. These were first established between the practices which, depending on the context, constituted an element of culture and social affirmation."
- ❖ **Autonomy:** "The new organization of social time, which now more strongly distinguishes between work time and free time, is reflected in the need to limit the duration of games and matches to an acceptable length. [...] The cult of quantification, measurement and performance now determines winners, reference times, distances covered, i.e. a new mastery of space and time."

At the end of the 19th century, the structuring of the sporting phenomenon, coupled with the imperatives of human mobility dictated by economic changes, meant that sport spread very rapidly, particularly through the existing colonial networks (Maltung, 1991, 150). This was helped by the development of sea and rail routes. From European sailors practicing sport during their stopovers, to the troops of the British Empire who organized sporting events in the colonies, sport became a powerful tool for asserting British superiority and spreading its values. However, this process of domination was not without its resistance. The colonized populations, seeing in sport a way to affirm their own identity and to escape the colonial yoke, gradually appropriated it and reinterpreted it according to their own cultural codes. This was the case, for example, of football in India, where the local population adapted the rules of the game to their own traditions and created a new sport, "Indian football", which was very popular.

It served as a tool for both cultural absorption and dominance on the one hand. However, for the colonial populations, it also served as a means of resistance and emancipation. This dichotomy still holds true today because athletics is a potent tool for fostering national identity and social cohesiveness as well as asserting cultural diversity and combating discrimination in all its manifestations. Nevertheless, this does not imply that the colonies were solely ruled by the metropolises. Sport's conditions of existence were changed through interactions between the center and the peripheries to better suit local circumstances." Turtletaub (2016), 467.

### **1.3 Sports' role in nation-building and cultural appropriation**

Edward Said (1993, 217), a leading theorist of the globalization process, argues that "the history of all cultures is a history of borrowing from cultures." The example of sport can be transposed to this epigraph. Before supporting this with examples, it would be wise to dwell on the concept of nation-building, in that sport served as a cement for national cohesion.

"Nation-building is the most common form of collective identity formation in order to legitimize public power over a given territory. It is a process that projects itself into the future by drawing its references both from existing customs and institutions, redefining them as founding characteristics of the sovereignty and uniqueness of a State. A successful nation-building produces a cultural construction that includes a system of values and beliefs that serve as legitimizing functions for the structure of a State" (Bogdandy et al., 2005, 586).

One of the main keystones of this process remains sport. After reading Tom Brown's Schoolday, many foreign decision-makers and influential figures have chosen to invest in sport for their own cultural identities. Thus, this work was one of the major literary influences of Baron Pierre de Coubertin in his desire to "rerilize young Frenchmen" (Clastres, 2013) and to establish

France as a pioneer of the modern Olympic Games. In the British West Indies, the political activist C.L.R James (1963) very early on seized upon the mobilization capacities of sport to carry his independence claims. "James paradoxically used a British imperialist text to confront British imperialism and to carry the voice of nationalism in the British West Indies. Although he knew that sport, and especially cricket, was a language spoken all over the world, he never lost sight of the fact that it was above all a means of asserting local identities" (Dyreson, 2003, 96).

In Latin America, the history of Tom Brown and its penical contours has served as a breviary for the emergence, thanks to sport in general and football in particular, of national cultures present in this region. "In Latin America, football sometimes counts more than anything else," says Eduardo Galeano, a Uruguayan writer. This country is part of a long South American tradition of using sport as a builder of identities (Giulianotti, 1999). Located between its two large Argentine and Brazilian neighbors, football has been a vector for Uruguay to emerge a collective identity thanks to the influence of its national team crowned at the Olympic Games in 1924 and 1928 and at the World Cups in 1930 and 1950. "This sky-blue jersey was proof of the existence of a nation. [...] Football has propelled this small state out of the meanders of a universal anonymity." (Galeano, 1995, 45).

This political use of football was also used in Africa and more precisely in Algeria where it experienced one of its greatest illustrations. "Between 1958 and 1961, the successive departures to Tunis- where the base of the National Liberation Front (FLN) is located of 29 Algerian footballers from the French professional championship to found the first Algerian national team actually refer to memorial issues-unity of the nation, sense of dedication and exemplarity largely instrumentalized by the political power" (Frenkiel, 2007, 222).

Through their 91 matches (including 65 victories) played in "fourteen countries (Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Jordan, Iraq, China, Vietnam, USSR, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia) whose geopolitical map prefigures the alliances of the future Algerian Republic", these players are considered as "true ambassadors of the Algerian cause" (Lanfranchi, 1994, 71). Bringing sporting, cultural, psychological and financial prestige (Fatès, 2002, 603-604), this team was a remarkable and noticed support for the FLN both in its work of internal mobilization and in its search for international recognition. It still serves today as a "founding myth of the Algerian nation" (Frenkiel, 2009, 211).

On the US side, the political interest in sport began at the dawn of the 20th century. "When, between 1890 and 1920, the USA supplanted Great Britain as the world's leading superpower,



Americans began to think that their sporting tradition would make the globe more American, just as, a generation earlier, the British thought of their own" (Dyreson, 2003, 97). This desire for influence was already present at the time of the participation of the American delegation to the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, where it was sent to "sell the United States to the rest of the world," according to colonel Robert Thompson, before taking a real institutional turn after the Second World War, around the concept of "sports diplomacy."

## **2. Sport as a Tool of International Relations:**

In the early 20th century, the French writer and diplomat Jean Giraudoux, assured: "sport is peace." In the opposite, then English writer and Journalist George Orwell said: "sport is war without weapons." One represents two very different perspectives on the sporting phenomenon: one is peaceful, viewing it as a means of universal pacification, while the other is aggressive., where it is represented as a field of symbolic confrontation.

Between these two positions, the theoretical concept, very little studied until then, of "sports diplomacy" deserves to be highlighted, in order to bring depth and nuances to the debates on the sporting lever of diplomatic apparatuses (Pigman, 2014, 94 - 114).

### **2.1 Diplomacy: Two Approaches, One Goal**

In its most general sense, diplomacy is defined as "the conduct of relations between sovereign states with a presence in the political world through official agents and in a peaceful manner" (Bull, 1977, 156). In the literature, this concept has two major derivatives.

The first is "polylateral". It is proposed by Wiesman (2004). For him, diplomacy is "the conduct of relations between, on the one hand, one or more official entities (one or more states, or an NGO) and, on the other hand, at least, one non-official, non-state entity, with which there is a prospect of normalization of relations." He adds that this process can be carried out through the exchange of reports, communications, negotiations and representations, without this implying a recognition of sovereignty, or equivalence between the two parties.

The second, called "multi-stakeholder", owes its kinship to Hocking (2006). Diplomacy is described there as "interested in the creation of networks between state and non-state actors, with a view to thinking about the solution of a given object of litigation, which requires resources that none of the parties concerned has a monopoly on."

Whichever approach is chosen, the tools available to international diplomatic actors remain the same. The characteristics of traditional diplomacy - representing, promoting and highlighting the values and interests of a nation do not change. "In this fundamental sense, diplomats who

represent their states are an integral part of the international community, and via the diplomatic corps, offer a symbolic unity of the human race" (Murray, 2012, 578).

## **2.2 Sports Diplomacy: The United States, Precursors**

The first to have filled this role in sport were the American and Chinese ping-pong players, in a match played on April 14, 1971. The context of this meeting is as follows: "At the time, the People's Republic of China and the United States had been in diplomatic deadlock since the creation of Communist China in 1949. The United States supported Taiwan, which the People's Republic of China did not recognize. China and the United States were then engaged in a propaganda battle, not hesitating to raise the specter of nuclear confrontation." (CSFRS & IRIS, 2013, 5) After the Sino-Soviet split of 1961 and in view of the growing hostility between the two communist countries, the Sino-American rapprochement gradually entered the interests of the two countries, of which the USSR had become a common enemy. "But how to make the populations accept a rapprochement with an ideologically enemy country? A pretext was needed, and sport could provide it" (CSFRS & IRIS, 2013, 6).

It was in this context that the two teams met, before the American players were invited to an official reception. Henri Kissinger (2011), then Secretary of State for the United States, wrote about this: "The young Americans, stunned, found themselves in the Great Hall of the People in the presence of Zhou Enlai, the Chinese Prime Minister, an honor that the majority of foreign ambassadors stationed in Beijing had never been granted. He declared on this occasion: "You have opened a new chapter in the relations between the American people and the Chinese people. I am sure that the beginning of your friendship will be supported by the majority of our populations." The American athletes remained speechless, which led the Chinese Prime Minister to conclude: "don't you think so?" which had triggered a round of applause."

Sport was therefore used as a diplomatic tool to bring the two countries closer together. Boniface (2014, 115) emphasizes the fact that this parallel diplomacy did not directly involve the capitals in the event of failure. It allowed both to send signals to national and world public opinion and to test a rapprochement to allow it to take on a larger scale. This chapter remains "mythical" (Griffin, 2014) in the history of international influence through sport.

Still in the context of the Cold War, the USA used sporting competitions to assert their power, President Ford (1974) going so far as to declare: "Given what sport represents, a sporting success can serve a nation as much as a victory, military." The Olympic Games, given their strong symbolic value coupled with an increasingly powerful media reach, then represented a particularly popular diplomatic playground. "It was at this time that the Olympic medal table

took on strategic importance, with the United States and the USSR wanting to prove that their respective systems (capitalist or communist) produce the best athletes." (CSFRS & IRIS, 2013, 6). The decisions to boycott the 1980 Moscow Games and the 1984 Los Angeles Games only developed the diplomatic fabric of sport, each power seeking to extend its sphere of influence to reduce the spectrum of national representations present in "enemy territory".

At the end of the Cold War, the ideological struggle was no longer relevant, but the United States did not leave the arenas of influence through sport. Some sports programs for Latin American and Eastern European countries are funded. They include subsidies as well as exchanges of athletes. From 2002, this policy will target new territories, particularly in the Middle East. To do this, the US administration gave it a new impetus, by creating Sports United. This is a structure attached to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, itself under the Department of State (responsible for international relations). Its mission is to "transcend cultural differences and bring people together [...] to enable dialogue and better cultural understanding." This approach gained new momentum with the arrival of Hillary Clinton as head of the State Department, as it was part of her political logic, centered around "smart power." When she took office in January 2009, she indicated that of all the coercive or non-coercive instruments available to her, "diplomatic, economic, military, political and cultural, the right tool or the best combination must be chosen for each situation. It is a question of arranging "soft power" and "hard power" in a global strategy of influence. [...] Sport will be part of the panoply aimed at improving the image of the United States in the world."

Following the example of the United States, many other countries have used the opportunities for visibility and affirmation that sport offers, even marking the transition from a diplomacy through sport to a diplomacy of sport. Among them, some are confirmed on the 50 international scene, such as China, England and France, while others are still, to varying degrees, emerging, such as Brazil, South Africa and Qatar. The latter state has massively invested in the sports field, and "has been working for several years to deploy a whole battery of public policies and economic strategy at the service of an impressive 'sport power'" (Abis, 2013, 117-130), with vertical integration throughout the value chain of global sport. Its objective is to overcome its intrinsic weaknesses, and to achieve its strategy on the internal and external levels, of nation branding. we will focus on this concept, then on its relationship with sport.

### **3. Sports as a Nation-Branding Tool**

While the association of nations with certain products, personalities, or landscapes has a long history, the concept of nation branding is relatively recent. We will therefore return to its

contemporary conceptualization, but before that, it would be wise to dwell on the meaning of its two units of meaning.

### 3.1 The Concept of Nation-Branding

A nation, as defined by the Larousse dictionary, is a group of people who form a political community and reside in the same land and share a common origin, history, culture, traditions, and occasionally language. It is also defined as an indivisible, collective, abstract entity that possesses sovereignty apart from the people who comprise it.

The English term "branding" means, according to business dictionary, "the process of creating a unique name and image in the minds of consumers. It aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence on the market, in order to attract and retain customers."

It is then understood that nation branding draws its origins from the marketing logic of so-called commercial brands. The latter are defined by the American Marketing Association (AMA) as: "a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods and services of a seller or group of sellers and to differentiate it from those of the competition." This definition shows, in this context, the difference between a brand and a nation, even though both use branding. The following table, developed by Qui Sun (2009), a professor specializing in nation branding, formalizes this difference.

**Figure 1: Comparison between the brand image of a nation and that of a product**

	Nation brand	Product brand
<b>Offer</b>	Nothing to offer	A product or service on offer
<b>Attributes</b>	Difficult to define	Well defined
<b>Benefits</b>	Purely emotional	Functional and emotional
<b>Image</b>	Complicated, various, vague	Simple, clear
<b>Associations</b>	Secondary, numerous and diverse	Primary and secondary, relatively fewer and more specific
<b>Purpose</b>	To promote national image?	To help sales and develop relationships
<b>Ownership</b>	Unclear, multiple stakeholders	Sole owner
<b>Audience</b>	Diverse, hard to define	Targeted segment

**Source: Sun (2009)**

In short, nation branding is the application of marketing principles to the promotion of a nation. It aims to create a positive and distinctive image of a country in the international arena, in order to attract tourists, investors, and talent.

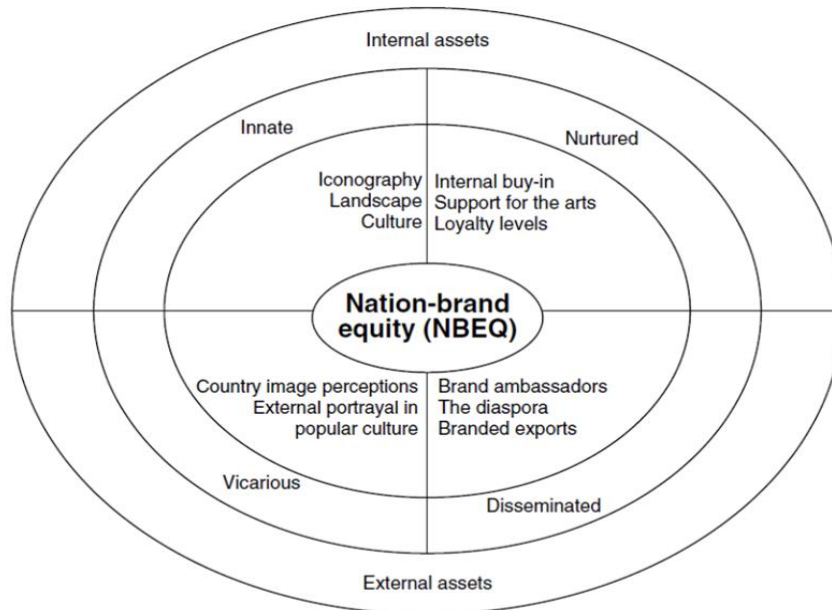
Sports have a great potential to increase the brand of a nation. They can:

- **Highlight a country's culture and values**
- **Showcase its natural beauty and infrastructure**
- **Foster national pride and unity**
- **Attracting investment and tourists**
- **Boost its reputation on the global stage**

Many countries have successfully used sports to boost their national image. For example, the United States is known for games such as basketball, baseball, and American football. All these are in the very spirit of the persona of the American and project a very dynamic and competitive image of the country. The same goes for Brazil, where football (or soccer) is the most popular sport and deeply bound with the country. Football is the sport that has given Brazil a substantial proportion of national pride, and winning accomplishments in the Brazilian national team have contributed to popularizing the country with passion and creativity.

Even if it is a significant means to nation branding, sports could only maximize their contributions with strategic uses. What is more important is that countries should select, with thought and care, the type of sport or sports they would like to promote and that their sports programs find alignment with overall nation branding objectives. The publication *Brands and Branding* (Clifton, 2009, 283) describes brands as "intrinsically striking", their role being to "create an indelible impression". This is a more convergent definition where the differentiating features of a brand can be applied to a nation. This is the essence of a nation branding strategy. Like any emerging concept, this one has several interpretations. One of them is to the credit of Kotler (1993). He defines nation branding as "the sum of the beliefs and impressions that the public associates with a place. [...] as the product of a reflection where he tries to keep the main ideas about a specific place." This definition certainly outlines the contours of the formation of individuals' perceptions of a territory, but it does not address the structure of a nation branding strategy or its target audience. Two elements that are found in the definition of Keith (2013, 15), one of the founding fathers of the concept in question. According to him, nation branding is "a unique and multidimensional integration that provides the nation with a relevant cultural differentiation from its target audience" (Keith, 2013, 15). To complete his definition, Keith (2013, 68) conceptualizes nation branding using the following diagram:

**Figure 2: The definition of nation branding as an addition of internal and external assets**



**Source: Dinnie (2013, 68)**

The diagram shows that nation branding is a process of creating a unique and relevant cultural differentiation for a nation in order to appeal to its target audience. The target audience can be tourists, investors, businesses, or anyone else who has an interest in the nation.

The diagram also describes nation branding as a complex process, replete with many different elements: history, culture, values, economy, and people.

Nation branding is a powerful tool to develop the image of a nation and its reputation in the world community. It is also used for promoting tourism, investment, and business opportunities.

This vision is shared by Lehu (2006, 272). He breaks it down into twelve main components:

- ❖ **A brand name:** This is the name of the country, which should be clear, memorable, and easy to pronounce.
- ❖ **A heritage:** This is the story of the country's past, which should be told in a way that is both informative and inspiring.
- ❖ **Codes of expression:** These are the visual and verbal elements that are used to represent the country, such as its logo, flag, and national anthem.
- ❖ **Positioning:** It refers to how the country wants to be seen by the rest of the world and, to this end, should emanate from its unique strengths and attributes.
- ❖ **A Market Status:** The country's place in the world market, and it should reflect in its nation branding strategy.

- ❖ **A personality:** This is the way that the country wants to be perceived by others, and it should be consistent with its values and goals.
- ❖ **A daily presence:** This is the ongoing effort to communicate the country's brand to the world, through a variety of channels.
- ❖ **Beliefs:** These are the fundamental values on which a country is based. These should flow into its strategy of nation branding.
- ❖ **Values:** These are the fundamental beliefs by which the country's behavior is guided, and these should well depict the brand of the country.
- ❖ **An image:** This is the way that the country wants to be seen by the world, and it should be based on its unique strengths and attributes.
- ❖ **An open and interactive relationship with its target audience:** This is essential for building trust and credibility with the public.
- ❖ **Informed attitude towards the audience:** This is quite tantamount to understanding the feelings and needs of the target audience and thereby making the branding process of the nation go accordingly.

Sun's (2009) article enriches the value of the other studies. This American scholar argues that "nation branding refers to the theory and practices dedicated to managing the reputation of nations." He points out that each country, as long as it is said by name, carries a unique image in the minds of individuals, both within and outside the country, without conscious efforts. Quin further explains in his article that these representations can be strong or weak, clear or blurry, and they contain the following elements: people, places, culture/language, history, food, fashion, and familiar faces (celebrities) (Fan, 2006). Sun concludes that there are six levels of interpretation of the nation brand, which are unanimously recognized in Anglo-Saxon literature:

- ❖ **Level A:** The nation brand is a visual emblem paired with a slogan.
- ❖ **Level B:** The nation brand is an umbrella brand that supports the numerous other brands within the territory that radiate regionally and internationally.
- ❖ **Level C:** The nation brand is the main lever of a country's reputation and the translation of its positioning.
- ❖ **Level D:** The nation brand aims to build and maintain a country's competitiveness.
- ❖ **Level E:** The nation brand enhances the "power" of the country.
- ❖ **Level F:** The nation brand relates to national identity. It is a unique and cross-cutting intertwining of elements that constitute the nation.

Regarding Morocco, the "National Vision," a roadmap punctuated by five-year plans until 2030, lists five major challenges that the country must face to ensure its future and four fundamental pillars on which the construction of Moroccan society must rely. "Regarding the five challenges, these include finding harmony between modernity and the preservation of traditions, ensuring good management of resources with a concern for intergenerational solidarity, mastering economic development, identifying labor needs, and articulating the necessity of development with social and ecological constraints."


In order to address these challenges, the National Vision proposes four fundamental pillars on which the construction of Moroccan society should be based: Good governance; Sustainable development social inclusion; Cultural identity.

In this perspective, Morocco has, as our hypothesis suggests, a nation branding strategy that integrates economic, social, and political strategies, emphasizing the value of natural, human, and economic resources, strategic positioning of the country, promotion of liberalism, and investment in research and new technologies. To theoretically verify this, we have chosen to use the theoretical framework entitled "components and signs of a nation brand" (Keith, 2013, 44) and add a third column transposed to the practical case of Morocco.

**Table 1: Nation branding of Morocco - adapted from Dinnie's model (2013, 44) by the author**

<b>Brand identity component</b>	<b>Nation-brand manifestation.</b>	<b>Case study of Morocco.</b>
<b>Brand identity component</b>	Strategy document agreed upon by the various members of the nation-brand development team -The team should comprise representatives of the government, public and private sectors, and civil society.	Case study of Morocco Moroccan National Vision (MNV) 2030.
<b>Brand vision</b>	Outline of the industry sectors and target markets in which the nation-brand can effectively compete. Will include segmentation strategies for sectors such as tourism, inward investment, education, etc.	Education, Sport, Luxury.



<b>Brand scope</b>	Some countries are known by more than one name (Eg: Holland/Netherlands). Nations should monitor whether such a duality in naming represents a potential asset or liability.	Ambassadors, especially sport ones Eg: Brahim Diaz.
<b>Name of the brand</b>	Some countries are known by more than one name Holland/Netherlands, Greece/Hellas.	“Morocco “.
<b>Codes of expression</b>	National flags, language, icons.	
<b>Everyday behaviour</b>	Political/military behaviour, diplomatic initiatives, conduct of international relations.	Diplomatic activism
<b>What makes the brand different?</b>	The uniqueness of the nation- embodied in its culture, history, people.	Modernist ambitions in a traditional context
<b>Narrative identity</b>	National myths and heroes, stories independence of emerging	King Mohammed 6 as the founding father of the "new Morocco", since 1999
<b>Advocate an ideology</b>	Advocate an ideology.	“Unlocking Human Potential “

#### 4. Moroccan Nation Branding: A Survival Guide

##### 4.1 Sport as a Key Strategy

One of the fundamental cornerstones of this nation-branding strategy is sport.

"Having become an essential element in the influence of a state and more broadly of all the actors who jostle on the international scene [...] sport now has a non-negligible strategic role" (Boniface, 2014, 11), that of a new instrument of power. The latter is defined as "the capacity to do, produce or destroy, or the capacity to impose one's will on others" (Aron, 1962, 16-17). In the literature on international relations, the criteria for this power are material and fall into two main categories: military, demographic and economic power, and scientific and technological potential. Morocco has chosen to "compensate for its power deficiencies by

relying on a new type of deterrent: soft power [...] In the era of the globalized world, digital technology and information highways, soft power and image power appear to the Kingdom to be more effective and protective than hard power, brute and coercive force."

#### **4.2 Morocco: A Taylorist Organization**

When studying Morocco's mode of operation, it becomes apparent that it perfectly aligns with the Taylorist functional structure. To achieve this, the division of the central entity must focus on essential activities. Looking at Morocco as an example, one notices that "its opulent commercial sector is a necessary instrument for its international actions, much like all countries projecting themselves as leading players. Moreover, incoming and outgoing foreign investments are the main means of any state strategy to fuel its international expansion. Morocco has built a high-level support system by structuring this external investment activity through several companies and funds. This configuration corresponds to the Taylorist approach, where we find five distinct functions:

#### **Financial Function**

**Organism:** Bank Al-Maghrib

#### **Role:**

- ❖ **Monetary Policy Management:** Bank Al-Maghrib is responsible for defining and implementing Morocco's monetary policy, ensuring price stability and regulating inflation.
- ❖ **Financial Stability:** The institution supervises banks and financial institutions to maintain a stable and resilient financial system.
- ❖ **Regulation and Supervision:** It regulates the banking sector, monitoring bank practices and ensuring compliance with international financial standards.
- ❖ **Promotion of Foreign Investments:** By facilitating a stable economic environment and offering fiscal incentives, Bank Al-Maghrib plays a crucial role in attracting foreign investments.
- ❖ **Foreign Exchange Reserves Management:** The central bank manages the country's foreign exchange reserves to support the national currency's value and ensure liquidity for international transactions.

## Production Function

**Organism:** Office Chérifien des Phosphates (OCP)

**Role:**

- ❖ **Phosphate Production:** OCP is the main producer and exporter of phosphates and its derivatives, an abundant natural resource in Morocco.
- ❖ **GDP Contribution:** OCP significantly contributes to the Moroccan economy through phosphate exports.
- ❖ **Industrial Development:** The organization invests in the development of the chemical and agrochemical industries, increasing the added value of exported products.
- ❖ **Sustainable Development Projects:** OCP is involved in sustainable development initiatives aimed at reducing the environmental impact of its activities and promoting eco-responsible production.

## Marketing and Communication Function

**Organisms:** Maghreb Arabe Presse (MAP) and Maroc Telecom

**Role:**

- **MAP :**
  - ❖ **National and International Communication :** MAP disseminates official information and promotes Morocco's image worldwide.
  - ❖ **Media Coverage:** The agency covers a wide range of topics, contributing to a better understanding of government policies and initiatives.
- **Maroc Telecom :**
  - ❖ **Telecommunications Infrastructure:** As the main telecommunications operator, Maroc Telecom manages networks and ensures connectivity across the country.
  - ❖ **Technological Innovation:** The company invests in technological innovation to improve telecommunications services and support digital growth.
  - ❖ **Accessibility:** Maroc Telecom works to reduce the digital divide by expanding Internet and mobile services in rural and remote areas.

## **Research and Development Function**

**Organism:** Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

**Role:**

Its goal is to provide the country with the intellectual resources capable of addressing the numerous issues arising from Morocco's development. The focus on this sector also positions the kingdom as a regional educational hub and a center of international scientific research.

## **Human Resources Function**

**Organism:** Government

**Role:**

For many years, Morocco has been suffering from an increasing emigration of skilled professionals and intellectuals to other countries in search of better job, educational, and investment opportunities. This massive emigration significantly impacts Morocco, causing a loss of human resources and economic opportunities, as well as hindering the country's comprehensive and sustainable development.

Each of these functions is headed by a high-level leader appointed by the King, meaning that the state acts as the general management, coordinating and directing the various sectors. The King effectively takes on the role of CEO.

Thanks to a strong horizontal division of labor, Morocco operates with professional and non-bureaucratic management parameters, which is not usually the norm for a state. One can deduce that Morocco's configuration resembles that of a multinational corporation. Ultimately, with such an organization, despite having the foundations of a patrimonial state, Morocco oscillates between a Traditional State and a State-Corporation whose founding principles are rationality and pragmatism, supported and relayed by a network of influence and extensive communication. This leads us to believe that Morocco stands out in this regard, with sports being the sector it has chosen to achieve this.

### **4.3 Morocco: A Nation Betting on Sports as a Differentiation Element**

First, they must establish a modus vivendi with their often-larger neighbors, ensuring peaceful relations despite potential provocations. Second, they rely on a powerful country to act as a military protector, as is the case with Morocco and the United States, which has a base and significant military agreements there. Third, they must exploit a niche unique to them, free from direct competition, to benefit first their neighboring countries, then their entire region, and even a broader part of the globe.

Aware that “the protective shield constituted by multiplying defense agreements and strategic and military partnerships with Western countries is not sufficient to protect against the many threats it may face,” Morocco, unlike other countries like Algeria and with a different logic from Egypt, has decided to offset its initial geopolitical stance with the strength of its image. The main vector and differentiation tool of this strategy is sports, in which Morocco aims to become a "hub."

One of the essential pillars of Morocco's sports strategy and nation branding lies in organizing major international events. This strategic choice not only promotes the country on the global stage but also catalyzes significant infrastructural, economic, and social developments. Here's how Morocco stands out in this area:

### **2030 FIFA World Cup:**

Morocco recently secured the hosting rights for the 2030 FIFA World Cup, a major achievement that puts the country in the international spotlight. This event is one of the most widely watched in the world, attracting millions of spectators and billions of viewers. Here are the main expected benefits:

**Promotion of the national image:** Hosting the World Cup is a unique opportunity for Morocco to showcase its cultural richness, hospitality, and technological advancements to the world.

**Infrastructure development:** To meet FIFA's requirements, Morocco will invest in constructing and renovating stadiums, hotels, roads, and other essential infrastructures, which will provide lasting benefits to the local economy.

**Economic impact:** Hosting the World Cup will stimulate Morocco's economy by attracting foreign investments, creating jobs, and boosting tourism.

**Social and national cohesion:** An event of this magnitude will unite the population around a common cause, strengthening the sense of belonging and national pride.

### **2025 Africa Cup of Nations:**

In addition to the 2030 World Cup, Morocco will also host the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON). Although smaller in scale than the World Cup, this tournament remains prestigious and crucial for the African continent. The expected benefits include:

**Strengthening ties with the African continent:** By hosting AFCON, Morocco consolidates its diplomatic and economic relations with other African nations, reinforcing its role as a regional leader.

**Continental visibility:** AFCON will provide Morocco with a platform to demonstrate its sports and organizational leadership in Africa, thereby increasing its political and economic influence.

**Tourism boost:** AFCON will attract supporters from across Africa and the world, boosting the tourism sector and highlighting Moroccan attractions.

**Sports development:** Hosting AFCON will showcase local talents and stimulate interest in football among Moroccan youth, encouraging sports practice at all levels.

### **Other International Events Organized by Morocco**

Morocco doesn't limit itself to major events like the World Cup and AFCON. The country has also hosted and continues to organize various international competitions in different disciplines such as:

**The Marrakech International Marathon:** This event attracts runners from around the world, highlighting Morocco's picturesque landscapes and promoting sports tourism.

**The Marrakech International Film Festival:** Although not a sports event, this cultural event elevates Morocco's international profile and attracts celebrities and visitors worldwide.

**World Judo and Taekwondo Championships:** These competitions reinforce Morocco's reputation as a top destination for sports events.

**Tour of Morocco Cycling Race:** An annual competition that attracts professional cyclists worldwide and showcases the diversity of Moroccan landscapes.

**Grand Prix Hassan II Tennis Tournament:** An ATP tennis tournament that attracts international players and promotes Morocco as a destination for racquet sports.

**2019 African Games:** Organized in Rabat, these multisport games brought together athletes from across the African continent, demonstrating Morocco's capacity to host large-scale sports events.

**African Boxing Championship:** Another international sports event that showcased African talents and strengthened Morocco's position as a host of important competitions.

**FIFA Club World Cup:** Morocco hosted this competition in 2013 and 2014 and 2021, attracting top clubs from around the world and offering a global showcase for Moroccan sports infrastructures.

Excellence in training is a key component of Morocco's football strategy. In line with this, a training institution has been established to support this goal, for young athletes known as The Mohammed VI Football Academy, established in 2009 in Salé, has become a jewel in football training, serving the promotion of national football, which has distinguished itself in recent years through numerous achievements at continental and international levels.

The Academy, born thanks to the visionary leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, has today become a reference in sports training and the detection of young talents.

The historic achievements of national football in recent years confirm, if needed, the considerable efforts made by the Kingdom in the field of sports training, remarkably embodied by the Mohammed VI Academy as a key to the success of national teams on continental and international stages. This is due to the emergence of a new generation of high-level players, some of whom now form the backbone of the national "A" football team. Graduates of the Mohammed VI Football Academy are always present in force within the national team squad, with players like Youssef En-Nesyri, Azzedine Ounahi, Nayef Aguerd, and the promising Abdelkadir Abqar, showcasing the quality of training provided by this sports structure at all levels.

In addition to presenting a reference model in player training and a nursery for young aspiring players, the Mohammed VI Academy is a Royal project aimed at promoting national football and developing its level by identifying young talents and honing their skills.

Covering an area of approximately 18 hectares, the Academy, which has mobilized investments of around 140 million dirhams, illustrates the High Solicitude with which His Majesty the King continuously surrounds sports in general and football in particular.

This center of excellence was built and equipped according to the standards in force in world-class European training centers, to ensure young Moroccans the ideal conditions to benefit from high-quality training, allowing them to evolve within the biggest clubs in Morocco and Europe. The Academy also represents the driving force of a strategic football training policy, including projects for the identification and detection of talents in the different regions of the Kingdom and the strengthening of the capacities of national technical staff.

Like the Mohammed VI Football Academy, which reflects the enormous efforts made in training, the remarkable success of national football is not the result of chance but the result of long-term work and good governance to promote the most popular sport at the national level and strengthen its competitiveness, in line with the enlightened Royal vision in this field.

The Kingdom seeks, through this training policy, to replicate the Spanish model which, in the aftermath of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games aimed at nurturing the youngest age groups to supervise and optimize their potential. Two decades later, this strategy proved highly successful. For instance, Rafael Nadal rose to prominence in world tennis, and FC Barcelona shattered records with a team primarily composed of players like Messi, Xavi, and Iniesta, all products of the Catalan training center.

"It is in this Academy that the future stars of tomorrow are nurtured, prepared, and cherished, with hundreds of scouts recruiting from all corners of the globe."

Besides the Search for and Training of Local Talent, Morocco Has Adopted a Strategic Policy to Enhance the Competitiveness of Its National Football Teams on the International Stage.

This policy involves attracting and integrating Moroccans abroad into its national teams. The Moroccan diaspora, rich in talents dispersed across the globe, represents a valuable reserve of players with not only high technical skills but also experience in high-level competitions in various foreign leagues. By integrating these players into the national teams, Morocco benefits from an infusion of expertise and international experience, which strengthens the overall competitiveness and performance of the teams.

This strategy is implemented through a network of scouts and international contacts who identify Moroccan talents playing in foreign clubs. The integration process is facilitated by simplified administrative procedures and initiatives aimed at reinforcing their sense of belonging to the Moroccan nation. Notable examples of this approach include players like Hakim Ziyech, Achraf Hakimi, and Noussair Mazraoui, who play for prestigious clubs in Europe.

Additionally, this policy is supported by strong institutional and logistical backing. The Royal Moroccan Football Federation (FRMF) plays a central role in coordinating efforts to attract these talents by regularly organizing training camps, meetings, and collaborations with foreign clubs. These initiatives allow players to integrate quickly and effectively into the national teams.

Players born and trained abroad often decline invitations from major football nations to proudly choose to play for Morocco. They speak Darija and Amazigh—with varying degrees of fluency—and bring linguistic diversity to the Moroccan national team. This results in a team comprising Francophones, Hispanophones, Dutch speakers, Anglophones, German speakers, and Italian speakers, all led by a Moroccan coach—born and trained in France—who skillfully navigates this diverse range of backgrounds.

They are all united under a single flag, defending the colors of a country most of them know only through their parents' memories. Scattered across the globe, these players born and trained abroad truly embody the word "diaspora," representing one people, shared values, and a love for their homeland.

### **4.3 The 4 Pillars of the Country's Development**

**Human Development:** The country's future success will increasingly depend on Morocco's ability to cope with a whole new international order based on knowledge and which will be extremely competitive. There is a real desire to modernize the education, healthcare and labor



sectors. On the other hand, the country wants to continue to attract important Moroccan diaspora in all fields as well as provide professional support for Moroccan women.

**Social Development:** Morocco wants to build a safe, secure, stable society based on effective institutions. The family will also play a very important role in societal development, it must be based on religion, ethics and patriotism. Finally, Morocco wants to strengthen its role at the regional and international level, particularly within the framework of the African Union, the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

**Economic Development:** First of all, the country wants to achieve a judicious management of exhaustible resources. The country's natural and human resources must be used to make sustainable development a reality for all its inhabitants. The conversion of these natural assets allows the country to have a significant financial windfall in order to invest in high-quality infrastructure, set up the provision of public services, create and train a high-quality and highly productive workforce while strengthening the role of the private sector. The country wants to achieve reasonable and sustained economic growth rates that will ensure a good standard of living for current and future generations. In conclusion, there is a desire to diversify the economy away from phosphate and agriculture while strengthening the role of the private sector.

**Environmental Development:** Morocco is committed to aligning its development with its economic growth while being attentive to social development and environmental protection. There is also the important relationship with God. The State considers that the natural environment has been entrusted by God and that it is therefore the mission of Moroccans to use it responsibly and respectfully for the benefit of humanity.

To combat the environmental challenge, the country wants to raise awareness among its population about the preservation of Morocco's natural heritage and that of its neighbors. The country wants to develop a comprehensive urban development plan that adopts a sustainable policy for urban expansion and population distribution.

In conclusion, there is a real desire for the country to raise awareness of environmental problems.

**Table 2: A Framework for Nation Branding Strategy and Legacy**

Core Theme	Cluster Category	Individual Code
<b>1.The nation branding opportunity</b>	Brand awareness/salience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Brand exposure</li> <li>✚ Publicity</li> </ul>
	Brand Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Authenticity</li> <li>✚ Culture</li> <li>✚ Brand</li> <li>✚ Story</li> <li>✚ People</li> </ul>
	Brand image, perceptions, reputation and positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Image and perceptions pre-event</li> <li>✚ External brand image legacy Africa perceptions</li> <li>✚ Co-branding</li> <li>✚ Credibility</li> <li>✚ Crime</li> <li>✚ Iconic images Infrastructure</li> <li>✚ Technology Competitive advantage</li> </ul>
<b>2.Key influencing factors of the nation branding legacy for the host nation</b>	Local residents/ citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Internal brand component Mobilizing residents in Morocco</li> <li>✚ Mobilizing residents Africa Residents support Capability</li> <li>✚ Education</li> <li>✚ Pride</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Social cohesion</li> </ul>
	The media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Brand message conveyed</li> <li>✚ Media Hosting</li> <li>✚ Media Negativity pre-event</li> <li>✚ Media Exposure</li> <li>✚ Media Impact</li> <li>✚ Media Legacy</li> <li>✚ Social media</li> </ul>
<b>3.Leveraging the nation branding opportunities</b>	Assessment of leveraging activities and missed opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Leveraging activities during event - Africa</li> <li>✚ Leveraging activities during event - business</li> <li>✚ Leveraging activities during event - tourism</li> <li>✚ Leveraging activities post-event</li> <li>✚ Leveraging benefits post- event</li> <li>✚ Missed opportunities</li> </ul>

**Source: B. Knott**

**Discussion:**

The process of sporting internationalization is complex and extremely varied; the ever-obvious intertwining and correlation between sports, political events, and national identities reflect general tendencies and changes in the socio-political landscape. Traditionally, sports played a key role on the process of nation building as it brought national unity and identity. It was especially seen in how sports were employed by one country, Britain in spreading its empire

and the ways that the colonies later used the same sports in a reverse manner as a way of refusing colonial domination and as a way of reclaiming the colonizers' cultural productions. In this sense, sports were both a mechanism of cultural imperialism and a vehicle of liberation - this would make it quite the effective instrument indeed. This had continued the strategic importance that sports had assumed in international relations in the 20th century. This gave way to the so-called "ping-pong diplomacy" between the United States and China in the 1970s. Similarly, during the Cold War, the political and ideological rancor between the United States and the Soviet Union was demonstrated each time the Olympic Games were held, as they used them as a platform to showcase each other's ideological superiority and political power. These instances illustrate sports being used as a soft power tool for opening up dialogue and cooperation among nations.

In modern times, the concept of nation branding has been developed, taking marketing principles to sell the image of a country in the global arena. Within that new strategy, sports become a centerpiece element that provides an unequalled and powerful means of showing off the culture, values, and accomplishments of a nation. Countries as different as the United States, Brazil, and Qatar have all succeeded in using sports to build their national brands and, with it, attracting tourism, investment, and much more, which global recognition brings along.

The use of sport for nation branding in the case of Morocco finds its self-expression in measures being rather strategic—from hosting large-scale international events to investments into sports infrastructure and training—as they enhance international reputation and affirm identity on the global scene. Through establishing itself as a serious player in the international sports arena, Morocco's investment in sports training and infrastructure would hopefully attract investment and increased tourism, plus help to instill national pride and unity. If Mohammed VI Football Academy is an example, with its return on national pride and international recognition of sports investment, proof abounds that investment into sports training, and infrastructure pays. Thereby, it is effective only when proper factors blend in together. Factors range from aligning sports initiatives with broader national branding objectives, strategically selecting the type of sports that are most likely to resonate with the target audience, and identifying maximum opportunities available in international events, aiming at visibility and impact. Some challenges include maintaining a consistent, authentic brand image while addressing the ever-changing socio-political and economic issues by countries.

### **Conclusion:**

The sport nation branding is a more advanced evolution than the historical relationship between sport and politics. Through its use to leverage national cohesion and global influence, countries can create national solid identity and positively transform their international image. Examples are given of how sports can be strategically used in countries as diverse as Qatar, the United States, Brazil, and Morocco. The history of the use of sports in nation-building and cultural domination, on the other hand, indicates that it could either be used as an instrument of oppression or be viewed as an opportunity for emancipation. The advancement of sports diplomacy through the 20th century is proof of the strategic relevance of sports in international relations, fostering dialogue and cooperation among nations. In the contemporary world, the concept of nation branding is still relatively new; it entails the application of marketing principles in creating an image for a country on the global scene with sports at the center. Strategically using sports to nation-brand Morocco exemplifies how countries can use sports to enhance their international reputation and identity on the global stage. Through the investment in sports infrastructure and the hosting of major international events, Morocco will be able to draw in investments, boost tourism, and further national pride and unity. In the process of globalization and its shifting nature, therefore, sport as a tool in nation branding is likely to gain more significance through unique opportunities that nations should explore for self-actualization on the global stage. These findings underscore the necessity for sports projects to align with broader national branding goals and to harness international events for purposes of maximum visibility and impact. By taking advantage of the power of sports, countries will build a strong national identity, increase their global image, and gain strategic advantage in the international arena.

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