

# Athens Journal of Sports



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# Athens Journal of Sports

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The *Athens Journal of Sports (AJSP)* is an Open Access quarterly double-blind peer reviewed journal and considers papers from all areas of sports and related sciences. Many of the papers published in this journal have been presented at the various conferences sponsored by the [Sport, Exercise, & Kinesiology Unit](#) of the **Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER)** & the [Panhellenic Association of Sports Economists and Managers \(PASEM\)](#). All papers are subject to ATINER's [Publication Ethical Policy and Statement](#).

# The Athens Journal of Sports

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The current issue is the fourth of the ninth volume of the *Athens Journal of Sports*, published by the [Sport, Exercise, & Kinesiology Unit](#) of the ATINER under the aegis of the Panhellenic Association of Sports Economists and Managers (PASEM).

Gregory T. Papanikos, President, ATINER.



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## **Same World Cup, Different News Frames**

*By Hyunmee Kang\**

*This study examined differences in slant, deviance, and prominence in news coverage of the 1998 France and 2002 S. Korea/Japan World Cup and host countries, considering countries' political, economic, and cultural ties as external determinants of the newsworthiness of foreign news. The main findings were that hosting the World Cup did not influence the positive image of a host country or the degree of deviance and prominence of news; U.S. journalists' preferences for topics covered in foreign news was found in World Cup-related host country news as well as general news of host countries; political, economic, and cultural ties between host countries and the United States were reflected in the general news of host countries; and news coverage of non-Western countries was significantly different in general news.*

**Keywords:** *news frames of international sporting events, deviance, 1998 and 2002 FIFA World Cup news, national images of South Korea, Japan, and France*

### **Introduction**

The present study analyzed U.S. newspapers for their coverage of the World Cup in 1998 and 2002, hosted respectively by France and S. Korea/Japan (hereafter Korea/Japan) to assess the comparative coverage of countries hosting international events, in particular sporting events, as part of their image management strategy.

The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup, an international soccer championship held every four years, is more than just a game to the countries that host the event. It is perceived as an opportunity to communicate ideas of nationalism to the public and to enhance the host country's image (McLaughlan 2001, Sudgen and Tomlinson 1998). Its appeal is thought to be comparable to that of the Olympics. Its audience for any single television event was estimated at 600 million to 2 billion viewers in the 1990s (Real 1989). For France and its people, the World Cup was expected to invigorate its economy, which had been in a recession (Lavin and Goldsmith 1998). S. Korea hoped that this mega sports event would “furnish the nation with a precious opportunity to raise its state image and external credit as well as derive various economic benefits” (“Chung Mong-Joon” 1999) and “promote friendship with Japan” (“Pres. Kim” 2000). Japan also expected the World Cup to promote new cooperative relations between Korea and Japan (Myung 2002).

The main concern of this study was how differently or similarly U.S. news media covered the 2002 World Cup, the only FIFA game which was co-hosted by two countries, on an assumption that differences/similarities in news stories about the host countries may show the influence of external factors (e.g., political, economic and cultural links between nations) on frequencies, topics, slant, deviance

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and prominence of news covering the two countries (Shoemaker et al. 1991, Wu 2003). Moreover, news about the 1998 World Cup that France hosted was compared to examine whether the factors were also reflected in differences between the news about France and about Korea/Japan.

## Literature Review

### *International Sporting Events as State-initiated Public Relations*

Public relations (hereafter PR), on the part of nation states, is “the planned and continuous distribution of interest-bound information ... aimed mostly at improving the country’s image abroad” (Kunzick 1997, p. 74). This interest-bound information may be direct, in the shape of advertising (Amaize and Faber 1983), or indirect, in the form of adaptation of images to news values to enhance the likelihood of being chosen as news because practitioners understand how news is selected and framed by journalists, which is of special concern to developing nations (e.g., Beaudoin and Thorson 2001, Crawford 1996, Winfield and Yoon 2002). Thus, PR agents, whether governments or practitioners, instrumentalize the mass media.

Reasons for state initiated public relations do not stop at image creation though. PR is often conducted to garner economic benefits such as increases in trade, tourism, and foreign investment and to influence foreign policy (e.g., Ahn 2002, Dinnie 2008, Giffard and Rivenburgh 2000, Grix and Lee 2013, Jaffe and Nebenzahol 1993). Thus, image management strategies and tactics that go beyond the distribution of interest-bound information are used to purposefully build a nation’s image as a tool of foreign policy (Malek 1997). They are a unique form of diplomacy, in which governments become “actors” (Signitzer and Coombs 1992, p. 138). In fact, Kunczik (2003) pointed out that “the dominating motive of political action is no longer the substantial quality of foreign policy, but the creation of newsworthy events” (p. 410). The premise is that an international event has “a primarily symbolic communicative character” and can be selectively used “to cultivate a certain image” (Kunzick 1997, p. 74).

Among international events, most governments vie to host sporting events because these may win them respect internationally and also assist them in promoting national identity domestically. Global sporting games have been utilized to reinforce the solidarity of nations and nationalism internally, as they simultaneously improve national images among the international community (Inthorn 2002, Steenveld and Strelitz 1998, Zeng and Kolmer 2012) and provide various political and economic advantages (Ahn 2002, Chen and Culbertson 1992, Gratton et al. 2001, 2006, Grix 2016, Liu 2017). The role of media which transmit the sporting experience to viewers is key to “inform our sense of our own identities and our characteristic stereotypical images of other nations” (Grix 2016, p. 74). Thus, the public relations efforts of these governments have concentrated on changing these negative images of their countries.

Wang and Shoemaker’s (2011) research on what has affected Americans’ opinion of China in the past 30 years showed that positive news coverage and the

number of public relations contracts China has signed with the U.S. are key factors which influence public opinion about China in the United States. Grix and Lee (2013) referred to “soft power,” which is found “in the ability of states to communicate universally shared values” by hosting sports mega-events such as Olympic and World Cup games.

Chen and Culbertson (1992) highlighted the public relations strategy of China’s central government in Beijing in hosting the 11<sup>th</sup> Asian Games, one of the biggest international sporting events, to improve its damaged image following the crackdown on the student movement in Tiananmen Square in 1989. The authors noted that wide Chinese media coverage of activities related to this event, focusing on “internal harmony and high morale,” ultimately helped “win back international respect and domestic support” (p. 40). Kim et al. (1989) claimed that the Seoul Olympic Games improved diplomatic relations with socialist and Third World countries and also stimulated patriotism and unity among Koreans. A current example was the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, S. Korea. Its very location contributed to a drastic tonal shift in news media regarding North Korea, ultimately changing into more favorable images. By spotlighting events, such as the inauguration of a joint Korean women’s ice hockey team, North and South Korean athletes marching in unison during the Olympics’ opening ceremony, and “the appearance of the slight, smiling and silent figure of Yo-jong Kim, the sister of North Korea leader Jong-un Kim” who was labeled “Rocket Man” (Rofe and Postlethwaite 2014, p. 106), the media created a more amicable perception regarding the often isolated country through the very frames it chose to display. Hence, North Korea’s involvement in the sports event has contributed to significant improvements in South-North relations.

On the other hand, scholars noted that hosting international events does not affect an image of the host country. NBC provided different coverage of two somewhat negative but similar incidents involving Koreans and Americans during the Seoul Olympics, downplaying the American incident while highlighting the Korean incident as negative (Lee 1989). In a study of the Seoul Olympics opening ceremonies, NBC, BBC, and TEN (Australia) focused on a “small group of mostly economically developed... nations” (Larson and Rivenburgh 1991, p. 91), underscoring the alliances common to the three white-dominated, capitalist societies. Coleman (1997) argued that the Seoul Olympics failed to improve the images of S. Korea and Koreans because, prior to and during the Olympic Games, U.S. news media devoted little attention to favorable news of the host country.

In this vein, the 2002 World Cup co-hosted by two countries was worthy of research to explore whether hosting the sporting event helps to place the host countries in a favorable light in news coverage. In particular, regarding foreign news value, this study paid attention to deviance, an internal factor that journalists prefer, and international relationships as external factors, which may influence news coverage of foreign countries.

*Deviance*

As a core ingredient and comprehensive indicator of newsworthiness, particularly for foreign news coverage, deviance refers to unusual, sensational, and controversial news items that journalists tend to prefer (e.g., Lee and Choi 2009, Wu 2003). Most news values or ways of defining newsworthiness are deviance-related. Shoemaker et al. (1991) noted that deviance was more powerful than country characteristics in predicting foreign news coverage.

The theoretical grounding for deviance is found in the social role of the mass media. The news media outlets serve a normative function in society and, to do this, they focus on events and situations that break these norms, i.e., on deviant events. In other words, “most social behaviors are made normal through the effective use of a series of images of some abhorrent reality or implacable enemy” (Gerbner 1978, p. 14). Thus, the media depends on and contributes to the dominant cultural ideology and its expression in the moral terms of bad news. An event may be considered extremely deviant in one society, while less deviant in another society. Some scholars noted that deviance may interact with country relationships in the selection of news such that more distant countries coverage of deviant events (e.g., Ericson et al. 1987, Shoemaker and Cohen 2006).

*International Relations between the Host Countries and the United States in 1998 and 2002*

The interactions between and among countries are considered a key determinant of the politics of mega sporting events (Lee 2017, Rofe and Postlethwaite 2014). A country’s involvement and links with, as well as interest in, another country are important determinants of international news coverage. Several studies have found an influence of these links, which may be political (diplomatic relations, economic aid, etc.), economic (trade, foreign investment, etc.), or cultural (race, religion, values, etc.), on the reporting of foreign events in U.S. media in terms of both the content and structure of news flow (Chang et al. 1987, Luther 2002, Shoemaker et al. 1987, 1991, Wu 2003). This study reviewed political, cultural, and economic ties between the U.S. and the three host countries in their respective World Cup years.

Political Links

When it comes to studying the influence of political links on news coverage, the Cold War era provided considerable fodder because of the ideological antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union (Ahern 1984, Haynes, 1984, Skurnik 1981). The U.S. news media devoted more news to countries that were on the same political or ideological side. U.S. media also reflected U.S. government perspectives or official foreign policy toward countries they covered (e.g., Kim 2000, Riffe 1996, Soroka 2003). The size of the U.S. military presence and U.S. economic aid at the time of both World Cups were considered for political links.

**Table 1.** *Political Links between the United States and Host Nations*

<b>Political Links</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>Korea</b>	<b>Japan</b>
<b>Size of U.S. military presence<sup>a</sup></b>	74	37,743	41,848
<b>U.S. economic aid (USD)<sup>b</sup></b>	N/A	50, 155,000	N/A

These indicators, adapted from Shoemaker et al. (1991), reflect 1998 data for France and 2002 data for S. Korea and Japan.

<sup>a</sup>Size of U.S. military presence, i.e., number of U.S. military personnel on active duty (U.S. Department of Defense 1998, 2002).

<sup>b</sup>U.S. economic aid, i.e., amount of monetary support from the United States (U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Overseas Loans and Assistance from International Organizations, Statistical Abstract of the United States 1998, 2002).

As seen in Table 1, the U.S. military presence in France was very small, and France did not receive economic aid from the United States in 1998, the year of the World Cup hosted by France. However, the two countries have a long history of alliance, which grew stronger in the face of the powerful and united Germany, created by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 (Jentleson and Paterson 1997). During the Gulf War (1990-1991), France and the U.S. cooperated closely; France sent 10,000 troops to serve under U.S. command in the war. France and the United States were also allied against terrorists in southern Afghanistan (Grossner 1994). France criticized military action by the United States against Iraq, but still France has been a major partner with the U.S. on security issues.

Table 1 shows Japan had a U.S. military presence at a similar level to that in Korea in 2002, the year of the Korea/Japan World Cup, while not receiving U.S. economic aid. In fact, since 1952, when Japan resumed national sovereignty by signing the Treaty of Peace with the allied powers, it has continued to rely on the United States politically, militarily, and economically. From the American point of view, the alliance with Japan was considered a deterrent of other potentially disruptive forces in East Asia, particularly China and North Korea, as well as assurance that Japan's potential military power would be kept in check and under the supervision of the United States (Dolan and Worden 1994). The American-Japanese relationship was characterized "by a basic asymmetry that ... increased over the years and [became] a major source of tension between these allies" (Gilpin 1989, p. 6). With time, the United States increasingly considered Japan as a leading partner to shoulder international aid and economic responsibilities that in the past were discharged by the United States and other Western countries. During the 1980s, U.S. officials voiced appreciation for Japan's aid to countries considered of strategic importance to the West, such as Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, and Jamaica (Dolan and Worden 1994).

South Korea had considerable U.S. military presence and was the only one of the three countries in this study to receive economic aid from the United States in the same year as their respective World Cup. U.S. relations with Korea have been influenced by a complex history of tensions between North and South Korea. The close relationship between the United States and S. Korea began with the division of the Korean peninsula at the end of World War II. In the decades following 1945, S. Korea continued to rely on the United States. Throughout the changes in world politics in the 1980s and 1990s, mutual cooperation and support were the dominant theme in political and diplomatic relations between the two countries

(Savada and Shaw 1990). S. Korea has, however, become less dependent on the United States for its security needs because, with the end of the Cold War and Seoul's improved relations with Beijing and Moscow, the probability of military action by N. Korea has been greatly reduced (Kim 1999). The size of the American force in S. Korea has been steadily reduced, and U.S. budget reductions have led U.S. policy makers to advocate general troop withdrawal, while S. Korea is gradually increasing its defense expenditure (Savada and Shaw 1990).

### Cultural Links

Cultural affinity defines the newsworthiness of foreign events. There is a consistent preference in the United States for "North European nations" (Prothro and Melikian 1952, p. 10). The news of a culturally close country is subjected to less-strict newsworthiness criteria than the news of a culturally distant country (Chang et al. 1987). This study reviewed the religious affinity in each host country and the racial ancestry and rank of ancestry of each nationality in the U.S. population.

**Table 2.** *Cultural Links between the United States and Host Nations*

<b>Cultural Links</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>S. Korea</b>	<b>Japan</b>
<b>Religious affinity<sup>a</sup></b>	Christian 92%	Christian 49%	Christian 0.7%
<b>Racial ancestry<sup>b</sup></b>	10,320,935 (4.1%)	N/A	1,004,645(0.4%)
<b>Rank of ancestry in U.S. population<sup>c</sup></b>	8 <sup>th</sup>	N/A	33 <sup>rd</sup>

These indicators, adapted from Shoemaker et al. (1991), reflect 1998 data for France and 2002 data for S. Korea and Japan.

<sup>a</sup>Percentage of Christians in host countries (The World Fact Book 1998, 2002).

<sup>b</sup>Number (and percentage) of people with the same racial ancestry as that of the host country and rank of this rank of this ancestry in the population of the United States (Census of Population, Supplementary Reports, Detailed Ancestry Groups for States, U.S. Census Bureau 1998, 2002).

France and the United States are culturally close as noted in Table 2. They share racial ancestry and religious affinity. The U.S. and Western countries such as France share a close cultural relationship in terms of ethnic bonds, language, and religion (Atwood 1987, Skurnik 1981, Wu 2003). Japan and the United States are considerably different in terms of race and religion as well as value systems. In other words, Japan is a high-context culture, where information resides more in the context and the communicator than in the message; places value on the group and conformity, and respects hierarchy. By contrast, the United States is low-context, values individualism and informality, and organizes society in more horizontal and egalitarian ways (e.g., Frith and Frith 1990, Hofstede et al. 2010). S. Korea and the U.S. also differ in cultural aspects. S. Korea has some religious affinity with the United States because 49% of S. Koreans are Christian, while there is no applicable data regarding shared, racial ancestry. The two countries also differ in their value systems. S. Korea shares many of the aforementioned cultural characteristics of the Japanese and to that extent is somewhat distant culturally from the United States.



### Economic Links

News coverage of Japan in U.S. newspapers was influenced not only by political links but also by economic conditions (Luther 2002). Economic interest drives people to seek news about another country to which it is economically related. In fact, economic links such as the magnitude of trade are considered more important predictors of foreign news coverage than ideological perspectives, language, or cultural links (Ahern 1984, Wu 2003). This study reviewed the amount of U.S. business assets, U.S. direct investment in the host countries, and foreign investment in U.S. business, and the ranking of the trade balance between the United States and the host countries during the period of each World Cup.

**Table 3.** *Economic Links between the United States and Host Nations*

<b>Economic Links</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>S. Korea</b>	<b>Japan</b>
<b>U.S. business<sup>a</sup></b>	168,435	35,776	431,911
<b>U.S. direct investment<sup>b</sup></b>	42,067	12,178	65,939
<b>Foreign investment in U.S. business<sup>c</sup></b>	59,925	2,439	152,032
<b>Trade balance (rank)<sup>d</sup></b>	243.2 (9th)	-12,996 (7th)	-69,974.4 (3rd)

These indicators, adapted from Shoemaker et al. (1991), reflect 1998 data for France and 2002 data for S. Korea and Japan.

<sup>a</sup>Amount of total assets (millions of dollars) for majority-owned non-bank foreign affiliates (Bureau of Economic Analysis: Survey of Current Business, U.S. Department of Commerce 1998, 2002).

<sup>b</sup>Amount of U.S. direct investment (millions of dollars) in host countries (Bureau of Economic Analysis: Direct Investment Position for 2003: Country and Industry Detail, U.S. Department of Commerce 1998, 2002).

<sup>c</sup>Amount of host country's investment (millions of dollars) in the United States (Bureau of Economic Analysis: Foreign Investment, U.S. Department of Commerce 1998, 2002).

<sup>d</sup>Amount of trade balance (millions of dollars) was calculated by comparing export and import amounts, and rank refers to the place in the list of top 10 countries with which the United States trades (Country and product trade data, Foreign Trade Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau 1998-2003).

According to Table 3, in 1998, France was second after Japan among the three host countries in economic links with regard to the number of U.S. businesses in France, amount of U.S. direct investment in France, and amount of French investment in the United States. Also, France ranked ninth on the list of top 10 countries trading with the United States. France was the third-largest direct investor in the United States following the United Kingdom and Japan in 1998. It had a positive trade balance with the United States. France was also one of America's foremost partners in the high-technology sector (World Fact Book 1998). Economic relations between France and the U.S. have been on the whole interdependent.

In 2002, Japan showed the closest (among the three host countries) economic relations with the U.S. Japan had a negative trade balance with the United States and ranked third on the list of top 10 countries trading with the United States. It emerged as the third largest economic power in the world by the mid-1970s. The post-Cold War environment increased the importance of economics over military power as the major source of world influence in the early 1990s. These days, the U.S. and Japan have hundreds of cooperative arrangements both governmental and private.

In 2002, S. Korea ranked seventh on the list of top 10 countries trading with the United States. For decades after 1945, S. Korea's reliance on the United States influenced the overall relationship between the two nations including their economic relationship. However, changes occurred in the economic relations between the two countries in the 1980s and 1990s. As S. Korea recovered from a brief but sharp economic recession in the 1980s, it resumed a high rate of growth that lasted well into the 1990s. A major issue that developed between the two countries was trade imbalance. In 2002, the U.S. ran a \$13 billion trade deficit with S. Korea, resulting in accusations of unfair trade in the United States.

All three countries were on the top 10 list of America's trading partners in their respective World Cup years, but Japan had the most and S. Korea the fewest economic links with the United States. However, the data indicates that S. Korea's economic links had created some controversy with the United States around 2002. Politically, Japan and S. Korea were more dependent on the United States in terms of military and economic aid, but the alliance of the United States with France since the Second World War was less strained, at least until very recently, as opposed to the alliance with Japan and S. Korea, which though close was stressful at times and changing. Thus, descriptive secondary data indicates a closer and more favorable political alliance between France and the United States than between Korea/Japan and the United States. In cultural terms, France is closest to the United States, while Japan and S. Korea are quite distant. In sum, France is assessed, albeit judgmentally, to be closer to the United States than Korea/Japan, and Japan to be closer than S. Korea.

### **Research Questions**

This study examined three types of news: World Cup event (WCE) news such as game schedules and locations, World Cup-related host country (WCHC) news about the host countries but related to the event, and other host country (OHC) news about the host country unrelated to the event. Also, three comparative research questions (RQs) were addressed to compare 1) the 1998 France and the 2002 Korea/Japan World Cup coverage, 2) the news of Korea and Japan co-hosting the 2002 World Cup, and 3) the three countries' WCHC and OHC news.

- RQ1. Does news coverage of the 1998 France and 2002 Korea/Japan World Cup differ in amount, topics, slant, deviance, and prominence?
- RQ2. Does news coverage of Japan and Korea during the 2002 World Cup differ in amount, topics, slant, deviance, and prominence?
- RQ3. Does news coverage of the three countries differ in slant, deviance, and prominence?

## Research Method

### *Sampling*

Four newspapers--the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, and *Washington Post*--were selected because of their considerable international newsgathering ability and extensive coverage of international affairs. The period of study was 1996 to 1998 for the 1998 France World Cup and from 2000 to 2002 for the 2002 Korea/Japan World Cup. These periods were selected because more than 95% of World Cup news, in the sample papers, searched by the keywords "1998 World Cup" and "2002 World Cup" were found within these time periods for the respective event.

Stories were located in the sample newspapers using the keywords "1998 World Cup" and "France" for 1996 to 1998, and the keywords "2002 World Cup" and "South Korea/Japan" for 2000 to 2002 through *Proquest*. Fixed news in each newspaper, for example, "information bank abstract" in the *New York Times* (NYT) and "global market" in the *Washington Post* (WP) was excluded because it provides information about stock market changes.

All located WCE and WCHC stories were analyzed. For OHC news, 100 news articles were analyzed for each country. Systematic sampling, using a skip interval and a random starting point, was used to select these 100 stories for each country. The coding unit was the entire story for the variables topic, slant, and prominence. For statistical and normative deviance, the coding unit was each occurrence.

### *Measuring*

Topics referred to subject matter. The categories for the topic were 1) political, 2) economic, 3) military, 4) social/religious, 5) scientific/educational, 6) art/recreational, 7) sports, 8) international relations, and 9) other. These were collapsed into four categories--political, economic, cultural, and sports--for the statistical analysis.

Slant referred to direction. The categories for slant were 1) favorable, 2) unfavorable, 3) no direction, and 4) balanced. The direction was inferred from positive and negative news. For example, if the story focused on cohesion, stability, success, lawfulness, or other such positive traits, it was considered a favorable story. On the other hand, if the story focused on threats of terrorism, conflict, immorality, etc., it was coded as unfavorable. Balanced stories had both types of foci, and stories with no direction did not have a slant (for example, they provided information only about the event and such information about the host country as travel sites).

Statistical deviance referred to the extent to which the event or person was "usual," and normative deviance to the extent to which the event or person, if present in the United States, would have broken U.S. norms. For both statistical and normative deviance, scores were calculated for "deviant" persons and events

(controversies, scandals, etc.) using a four-point scale (Shoemaker et al. 1987, 1991).

Prominence referred to the degree of importance journalists placed on the news item. Prominence was calculated based on the size (in number of words) and the location (page on which the story appeared) of the article. Size and location scores were multiplied to get a prominence score for each story.

### *Inter-Coder Reliability*

A composite reliability coefficient<sup>1</sup> was used for three coders trained prior to the coding who participated in pretests that used the coding rules. The reliability scores for the study were 95% for topic, 73% for slant, 75% for statistical deviance, 71% for normative deviance, and 89% for prominence.

## **Findings**

Altogether, 1,383 WCE, 255 WCHC, and 1,200 OHC articles were analyzed. While differences between newspapers were not of interest to the study, in general, in the sample across both events, WCE stories were more or less evenly distributed across newspapers except for *USA Today*, which had a considerably smaller percentage, and WCHC news was varied in its distribution, with the *Washington Post* having the largest percentage and *USA Today* the smallest. Also, among topics in the sample, cultural and sports topics were somewhat predominant in WCHC news, while political and economic topics had a slight edge in OHC news. In WCHC sample news, unfavorable stories were the largest in number, but in OHC news, it was news with no direction that was predominant.

### *Differences between the 1998 France and 2002 Korea/Japan World Cup News*

Of the WCE articles, 808 (58%) were for the 1998 France World Cup and 575 (42%) were for the 2002 Korea/Japan World Cup. This difference was significant, indicating greater coverage of the France World Cup ( $\chi^2=119.2713$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The difference in 255 WCHC articles between the 1998 France World Cup (52%) and the 2002 Korea/Japan World Cup (48%) was also significant, indicating greater coverage of the France World Cup ( $\chi^2=135.2713$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The distribution of OHC news was not compared because an equal number of articles (400) was sampled for each host country.

In terms of topics, slant, and statistical/normative deviance, WCE news was not analyzed because 91% of WCE news of the 1998 World Cup and 83% of the 2002 World Cup was related to the actual sporting event.

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<sup>1</sup>Composite reliability = Number of coders (average inter-coder agreement)/1 + (N-1) (average inter-coder agreement).

**Table 4.** Distribution of WCHC News and OHC News by Topic

	WCHC News <sup>a</sup>			OHC News <sup>b</sup>			OHC News <sup>c</sup>		
	1998	2002	Total	F	J	Total	F	K	Total
<b>Political</b>	4 (3%)	26 (21%)	30 (12%)	135 (34%)	104 (26%)	239 (30%)	135 (34%)	187 (47%)	322 (40%)
<b>Economic</b>	0 (0%)	11 (9%)	11 (4%)	37 (9%)	137 (34%)	174 (22%)	37 (9%)	80 (20%)	117 (15%)
<b>Cultural</b>	1. 59 2. (45%)	3. 47 4. (38%)	6. 106	116 (29%)	117 (29%)	233 (29%)	116 (29%)	110 (28%)	226 (28%)
<b>Sports</b>	69 (52%)	5. 39 (32%)	7. 108 (42%)	112 (28%)	42 (11%)	154 (19%)	112 (28%)	23 (5%)	135 (17%)
<b>Total</b>	132 (52%)	123 (48%)	255 (100%)	400 (50%)	400 (50%)	800 (100%)	400 (50%)	400 (50%)	800 (100%)

<sup>a</sup>Eight categories were recoded into four--political (political, military and international relations), economic, cultural (social/religious, science/educational and art/recreational) and sports-- for this analysis. A ninth category, other, had only one story and was not included in the analysis for WCHC news. Significant difference in topics of WCHC news between France and Korea/Japan ( $\chi^2=38.530$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

<sup>b</sup>Significant difference in topics of OHC news between France and Japan ( $\chi^2= 96.084$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

<sup>c</sup>Significant difference in topics of OHC news between France and Korea ( $\chi^2= 83.986$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

For WCHC news topics, a significant difference was found between France and Korea/Japan (Table 4). France received more cultural stories, such as stories about art/recreation, films, cooking, and travel, and sports stories as compared with Korea/Japan, and Korea/Japan received more political and economic stories. For France, only four (3%) of the stories were on politics and there were no stories on economics; for Korea/Japan, 26 (21%) of the stories were on politics and 11 (9%) were on economics. Topics differed between OHC news of France and that of Japan. While cultural topics did not differ in number, Japan received much larger (34%) economic coverage than France (9%), though not quite as much political and sports coverage. Also, topics differed between France and Korea ( $\chi^2=83.986$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The percent of stories on culture was not very different, but Korea received much more economic coverage than France. Also, while both countries received the highest coverage on political topics, Korea received 187 articles (47%), which included 107 articles (27%) on international relations, as compared with 135 (34%) for France. Also, France received considerably more sports coverage than did Korea.

France received considerable unfavorable coverage due to the strike by Air France pilots during the World Cup, which according to the media was intentionally called to thwart the World Cup. Korea too received unfavorable coverage; for example, Korean canine cuisine was covered. In OHC news, Japan (20%) received more unfavorable coverage than France (13%) in Table 5. Unfavorable news about Japan focused on its economic recession and unemployment rates. S. Korea (33%) also was described less favorably than France (13%). Examples of this unfavorable coverage included Korea's strained relationship with N. Korea and the threat of nuclear war from N. Korea.

For the degree of deviance in WCHC news, France and Korea/Japan did not differ in either statistical or normative deviance. But regarding OHC news, the three countries' mean scores showed statistical differences. France and Korea differed significantly in both statistical ( $t=-3.474$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and normative deviance ( $t=-4.274$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Korea was portrayed as more deviant than France in both respects. At the same time, it needs to be recognized that these results did not have much practical significance because, on the whole, the deviance scores were low,

indicating that events and persons were portrayed as more or less normal. France and Japan did not differ in either statistical or normative deviance.

**Table 5.** *Distribution of OHC News by Slant*

	OHC News for France and Japan <sup>a</sup>			OHC News for France and Korea <sup>b</sup>		
	F	J	Total	F	K	Total
<b>Favorable</b>	31 (8%)	42 (11%)	73 (9%)	31 (8%)	40 (10%)	71 (9%)
<b>Unfavorable</b>	51 (13%)	80 (20%)	131 (16%)	51 (13%)	132 (33%)	183 (23%)
<b>No direction</b>	307 (77%)	246 (61%)	553 (69%)	307 (77%)	205 (51%)	512 (64%)
<b>Balanced</b>	11 (3%)	32 (8%)	43 (6%)	11 (3%)	23 (6%)	34 (4%)
<b>Total</b>	400 (50%)	400 (50%)	800 (100%)	400 (50%)	400 (50%)	800 (100%)

<sup>a</sup>Significant difference in slant of OHC news between France and Japan ( $\chi^2= 25.062$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

<sup>b</sup>Significant difference in slant of OHC news for France and Korea ( $\chi^2= 61.549$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

Scores for prominence of WCE stories ranged from 12 to 8,346. The mean prominence of these stories differed significantly between the France (994.12) and Korea/Japan (875.31) World Cup ( $t=2.398$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). WCE stories were covered more prominently for the France than the Korea/Japan World Cup. In terms of prominence, scores for WCHC stories ranged from 12 to 6,930 for France and from 43 to 5,637 for Korea/Japan. Mean prominence did not differ significantly between France and Korea/Japan. OHC prominence scores ranged from 15 (Korea) to 10,182 (France). The mean prominence of these stories was not significantly different between France and Japan but was significantly different between France (1,388.93) and Korea (953.04) ( $t = 4.648$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) with greater prominence given to stories on France.

#### *Differences in News about Korea and Japan for 2002 World Cup News*

Twenty-seven stories of WCHC news (22%) covered both Japan and Korea. The comparative analysis for Korea and Japan did not include these shared stories. For the remaining stories, a significant difference was found. Korea (77%) received more coverage than Japan (23%) ( $\chi^2=29.568$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). This greater coverage of Korea is possibly related to the Korean soccer team's final four appearances in the 2002 World Cup.

**Table 6.** *Distribution of 2002 OHC News by Topic*

	OHC News <sup>a</sup>		
	Japan	Korea	Total
<b>Political</b>	104 (26%)	187 (47%)	291 (36%)
<b>Economic</b>	137 (34%)	80 (20%)	217 (27%)
<b>Cultural</b>	117 (29%)	110 (28%)	227 (28%)
<b>Sports</b>	42 (11%)	23 (5%)	65 (8%)
<b>Total</b>	400 (50%)	400 (50%)	800 (100%)

<sup>a</sup>Significant difference in topics of OHC news between Korea and Japan ( $\chi^2= 44.4155$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

For news topics, WCHC coverage of Japan and Korea did not differ, while for OHC news, Korea received more political (47%) stories and Japan received more economic (34%) stories ( $\chi^2=44.4155, p<0.001$ ) (Table 6).

**Table 7.** Distribution of 2002 OHC News by Slant

	OHC News <sup>a</sup>		
	Japan	Korea	Total
<b>Favorable</b>	42 (11%)	40 (10%)	82 (10%)
<b>Unfavorable</b>	80 (20%)	132 (33%)	212 (27%)
<b>No direction</b>	246 (61%)	205 (51%)	451 (56%)
<b>Balanced</b>	32 (8%)	23 (6%)	55 (7%)
<b>Total</b>	400 (50%)	400 (50%)	800 (100%)

<sup>a</sup>Significant difference in slant of OHC news between Korea and Japan ( $\chi^2=17.950, p<0.001$ ).

Considering the slant of news, the difference in WCHC news between Japan and Korea was not significant ( $\chi^2=3.256, p>0.05$ ), while a significant difference in OHC news was found between Korea and Japan ( $\chi^2=17.950, p<0.001$ ), indicating that 33% of news covering Korea was unfavorable as compared with 20% for Japan (Table 7). Thus Korea received more unfavorable coverage than Japan. In particular, unfavorable news of S. Korea was about the corruption of Korean politicians, Korean demonstrations against Americans because of American military personnel's actions, including the death of two young Korean girls run over by tanks, and S. Korea's strained relations with North Korea.

For deviance scores, statistical deviance scores in 2002 WCHC news did not differ between Japan and Korea, but normative deviance did ( $t=2.144, p<0.05$ ), with Korea being portrayed as more deviant. For OHC news, in terms of statistical and normative deviance, Japan and Korea differed significantly in both statistical ( $t=4.410, p<0.001$ ) and normative deviance ( $t=2.792, p<0.01$ ), with Korea being portrayed as more deviant.

Scores for prominence ranged from 98 to 5,2921 for Japan and from 43 to 5,637 for Korea in 2002 WCHC news. The mean prominence of WCHC news did not differ significantly between Japan and Korea. However, the mean prominence of OHC stories differed significantly between Japan and Korea ( $t=4.253, p<0.001$ ) with Japan receiving more prominent coverage than Korea.

#### *Differences in News Coverage of the Three Host Countries*

For all three host countries--France ( $\chi^2=110.207, p<0.001$ ), Japan ( $\chi^2=19.415, p<0.001$ ), and Korea ( $\chi^2=10.414, p<0.05$ )--slant differed significantly between WCHC and OHC stories. Largely, OHC news had a much larger percentage of stories with no direction, a larger percentage of stories that were unfavorable, and a smaller percentage of favorable stories. In terms of deviance, no significant differences between WCHC and OHC news were found for either statistical and normative deviance for France, Japan or Korea. A significant difference was found in the prominence of WCHC and OHC stories for Korea (1,265 and 953, respectively) ( $t=2.192, p<0.05$ ), but not for France and Japan.

## Discussion

In PR practices for states, the FIFA World Cup is considered a crucial opportunity to reach the public worldwide and enhance national image. The results of the study indicated that hosting international sports events contributed to some success but also failure in country image management in that existing relationships between countries were reflected in news coverage. In particular, this study confirmed this to be true for the two countries which co-hosted the 2002 World Cup. The study's findings implied, in other words, that if close links between countries, whether political, economic, or cultural, are not present, hosting an international sporting event does not necessarily positively influence the image of the host country or minimize deviance in news.

Foreign news coverage tends to be stereotypical in its selection of topics. The tendency of journalists to prefer stereotypical topics was found in the sample's coverage of World Cup-related host country news as well as general news. Overall, World Cup-related news in the 2002 Korea/Japan World Cup included politics and economics and the amount of economic and political news was significantly more than for France during the 1998 France World Cup, which had little such coverage and a much larger focus on culture and sports coverage. In general news of the host countries, more than half of the news about Japan and Korea was about politics and economics, and more than half of the news about France was about culture and sports. In other words, coverage furthered the stereotypes that France is the cultural bastion, Japan the economic powerhouse, and Korea the residue of the Cold War.

Deviance per se, generally a major determinant of newsworthiness of foreign events, was not an influential factor in the host countries' selection of World Cup-related news and general news. Most events and people covered were, on the whole, usual (statistical deviance) and did not, on average, violate any norms (normative deviance) in either World Cup. Instead, deviance and country relationships interacted with the tendency to stereotype topically, resulting, in general, in news about Korea that also included economic coverage because of the controversy the existing trade imbalance created, and, in World Cup-related news, both Japan and Korea received political coverage because they were involved in the controversial North Korean nuclear arms situation.

With regard to slant, in both World Cup-related news and general news of the host countries, unfavorable coverage was more predominant than favorable coverage, but in general news, the largest category was news with no direction. Also, World Cup-related news mostly covered culture and sports, and general news mostly covered politics and economics. The greater potential to slant stories when discussing sports and particularly culture because they are softer topics than politics and economics, might be the reason for this difference in slant within news topics.

Other variables more particularly reflected the host countries' ties with the United States. France generally received statistically more and better coverage than either Japan or Korea, but particularly Korea. For example, the 1998 France World Cup received more news coverage of the event and the related host country



than did the 2002 Korea/Japan World Cup, even though the latter event was hosted by two countries. Further, France received more prominent coverage in World Cup event news than Korea/Japan. Also, in general news, France received less unfavorable coverage than Korea and Japan. Korea (but not Japan) was portrayed as statistically and normatively more deviant than France, and France received more prominent coverage than Korea (but not Japan). Examples of the coverage Korea received include such controversial issues about Korea as canine cuisine and safety of the World Cup event in the face of possible terrorism or threat of war ascribable to nuclear weapons in North Korea as well as the anti-American mood of Korea. General news exhibited the greatest differences among countries, while event-related news treated the countries more equally than did World Cup-related host country news, which showed some, although not extensive, differences.

With regard to World Cup-related host country news, France, Japan, and Korea received somewhat, though not altogether, similar coverage, and that could be deemed a success. But in general news of the host countries, the media seemed to revert to their routine way of covering distant, non-Western countries less favorably, less prominently, and as more deviant. Even among non-Western countries, differences in coverage were present between the more developed and economically powerful Japan and the less developed and less powerful Korea. For example, in general news of the host countries, Japan did not differ from France in either statistical or normative deviance or in prominence, but Korea did so negatively.

Further analysis of differences in coverage of Korea and Japan confirmed these findings, again particularly for general news of the host countries. Korea was covered more unfavorably, less prominently, and as statistically and normatively more deviant than Japan. Only in World Cup-related host country news did Korea fare better than Japan; it was covered more frequently, but this was possibly due to its performance in the World Cup. Still, even in this type of news, Korea was portrayed as normatively more deviant than Japan.

For Korea, the 2002 World Cup was expected to improve its image, which the country believed had fallen since 1997, when Korea had to take funds from the International Monetary Fund ("Promotion of National Image" 1999) because of the country's financial crisis. Though one Korean newspaper said that "Korea's national image has moved up significantly since the 2002 World Cup" (Kim 2002), the findings of this study showed that hosting the World Cup sporting event did not result in a positive image of Korea in U.S. newspapers, at least as compared with the image of Japan and particularly France. Hosting an event did not change the way in which journalists preferred stereotypical news topics in World Cup-related news as well as general news. In sum, if close ties between countries, such as political, economic, or cultural links, are not present, hosting an international sporting event does not necessarily positively influence the image of the host country or minimize deviance in news.

Still, it must be recognized that, for a country like Korea, which receives little news coverage in general in the United States, hosting the World Cup event might have contributed to a greater degree of news coverage than it generally saw. Also, while Korea was portrayed as more deviant, the deviance scores were low in general. This may be an indication of greater sensitivity or greater familiarity (and,

hence, a smaller perception of deviance) among journalists in this globalized era. Finally, its image in countries other than the United States might have improved. Thus, the strategy of hosting international events to better a country's image is still worth pursuing, but its limitations and specifications need to be recognized and addressed where possible.

Of particular note in this recognition of specification is type of news. The nature of reporting for World Cup-related host country news may be different from that of stories done on general news of a host country. For comparative research questions across types of news, while only a few differences were found, these indicated that countries, including France, received better coverage in terms of slant and prominence in World Cup-related news than in general news of the host countries. This has implications for PR strategists and countries wanting to host major international events to improve their image. Also, this study analyzed the news articles published in traditional media but for further studies, researchers would explore a symbiotic relationship between the framings of sports events in traditional media and social media, for example, whether or not people tend to share the frames used by traditional media via social media or the agenda set by traditional media (e.g., Oh et al. 2020, Weaver 2007).

The results might be useful to governments and to PR practitioners because they provide a glimpse of what kind of coverage is afforded to countries, whether it is topics, slant, deviance, or prominence that most exhibits differences. PR practitioners can strategize about their approach using these results. Topics that are positive stereotypes could be played up and this would influence slant, deviance and possibly prominence.

State-initiated PR practitioners may also note this study's finding of the way media treats different news categories. In its separation of research questions and analysis by three types of news, the study highlights this point. The newspapers discriminated among countries most in general news. In World Cup-related news, on the other hand, the newspapers did not treat the countries very differently, possibly because this news was more event- than country-related. Thus, the inclusion of general news was a critical decision, and its analysis as a separate category of news was revealing. When journalists are in the country to cover an event, they uncover other stories about the country and present them within the framework of their nations' political, economic, and cultural views of that country. In practical terms, this means that PR practitioners need to focus their attention on all journalistic coverage rather than on the event alone as they prepare their press releases, create pseudo-events, and manage the event. In the face of the media tendency to cover deviant news and to allow country relationships to influence news selection, this may be a challenging task for distant, developing, non-Western countries, but awareness of this fact may be useful tactically.

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## Overview of Sustainable Solutions to Improve the Environmental Impacts of Mega Sporting Events

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*The International Olympic Committee, as the main sports organization in the world, has several criteria for handing over the Olympic Games to the host city. One of the most critical concerns in hosting sports events is paying attention to environmental aspects and sustainable development. In fact, the applicant cities must have practical environmental goals and action plans. Basically, the host cities have made significant initiatives to improve the environment in previous Olympic Games, but according to the data and studies, this major sporting event has also had detrimental consequences on the environment. Given the importance of sustainable development and environmental protection, this study examines the negative impacts of mega-sporting events on the environment. Therefore data were collected from qualitative interviews, library studies, and previous research. Fifteen experts in the sports and environment field were selected as a sample by snowball distribution method and the interview steps were performed until the theoretical saturation was reached (20-40 min in 3 sessions). After summarizing and analyzing the data, it was found that the negative environmental externalities mainly occur in the Infrastructure and construction, Transportation, and Waste management domains. Emphasizing the findings, the result of this research can be used to identify key local environmental concerns, and pressure points and provide part of the solution for organizers seeking to use their time and resources as efficiently as possible in achieving environmental goals.*

**Keywords:** *environmental factors, sustainable development, sport management, mega-sporting events, Olympic Games*

### Introduction

Climate change has already had impacts on event tourism. For instance, the Golden Rainbow Ice Fishing Contest was suspended in 2002 for the first time in its 20-year experience due to unpredictable and risky ice conditions induced by above-average winter temperatures in recent years. The annual Cordova Shorebird Festival (Alaska) has altered its schedule due to changes in the timing of bird migrations to the north as a result of recent climate change (Jones et al. 2006). Sports events can increase short-term, visitation-related advantages and long-term economic benefits for host cities. Simultaneously, these events have frequently faced opposition for their potentially detrimental effects on the environment and local communities. Adverse impacts on natural ecosystems by bringing pollution and waste into the most biologically and culturally rich areas; using nonrenewable natural resources; releasing greenhouse gases emission contributing to climate

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change and high consumption of energy and water during the event are examples of environmental impacts. For this purpose, the FIFA World Cup's "Green Goal" and Olympic Games' "Green Games" are presented as visual examples of efforts to raise environmental awareness and education among nations hosting future large sporting events (Ahmed and Pretorius 2010). Any major sports event has a significant environmental impact, including constant travel of teams and spectators by planes, buses, and cars, a massive amount of waste at competitions, and the destruction of natural areas for the construction of sports facilities such as stadiums (Wicker 2019). The majority of previous studies have focused on the positive effects of sporting events on the environment, society, economy, culture, and politics. Given that the negative effects of sporting events have been less discussed. Accordingly, in the current paper, we aim to Overview sustainable solutions to improve the environmental impacts of mega sporting events.

## Literature Review

### *Environmental Issues and Sport Events*

Environmental protection and climate change are long-debated problems that have only recently attracted transnational concern mainly due to a tremendous rise in international media coverage (Zhang et al. 2022, Dickson and Arcodia 2010). In recent years, several governmental and civic organizations have officially announced the necessity to address the environmental externalities of their actions. Many international agreements have led to national, regional, and local governments committing to act in more ecologically friendly ways (Collins et al. 2009). Environmental protection has evolved from a matter of social and political concern to communal and international responsibility. Environmental issues have been demonstrated to be an important priority not just due to the extent of changes to the natural environment, but also because of the rapid pace at which these changes are occurring (Dickson and Arcodia 2010). Events are an important element of the tourism industry since they provide significant economic, social, cultural, and educational advantages and the opportunity for tourism expansion in many international destinations (Schut and Glebova 2022). By their very nature, events generate waste. If events are well-managed, they may recycle surplus supplies and materials in relevant and productive ways with minimum impact on the environment (Dickson and Arcodia 2010, Glebova et al. 2022).

During the 1970s, concerns about environmental protection and sustainable development emerged far more prominently regarding the Winter Olympic Games than their summer games (Chappelet 2008). The Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was released at the first UN human environment congress in June 1972 (UN 1972), accompanied by the World Conservation Strategy in 1980 (IUCN 1980). Later in 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) indicated sustainable development in *Our Common Future*, which described the competitive and collaborative connection between humans and nature (WCED 1987).



The Olympic Games, as the world's largest social event, has chosen the green Olympic as its best environmental strategy. The promotion of environment and environmental protection started in 1994 with the debate on 'sports and environment' and the environmentally friendly hosts between the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and UN Environment Programme. This debate led to a sign of collaboration to strengthen the organizations' cooperation on environmental protection. Since 1996, IOC identified environmental protection as one of its duties and highlighted that the Olympic Games should be responsible for any environmental issues and mind people of this concern. Moreover, based on the Olympic Movements Agenda 21, Olympic Games must seek to promote global sustainable development and environmental consideration and all hosts must adhere to rigorous environmental protection requirements when hosting the event (Yang and Xu 2014). Therefore, several sports now provide event coordinators with environmental management guidelines and plans intending to host events (Woodside and Martin 2008).

According to Steiner (2006) from the Lillehammer Games (1994) to the Torino Games (2006), the environment has progressively been a crucial and a victorious competitor in the Olympic Games. IOC now considers the environment, along with sport and culture, to be the third pillar of the Olympic movement (International Olympic Committee 1996).

This commitment has been conveyed to local Organizing Committees for Olympic Games (OCOGs), who have agreed to examine the environmental impacts of their activities since the Lillehammer Winter Games in 1994, albeit with varying degrees of success. Plans for the Torino Winter Games in 2006, for instance, included initiatives to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions, reduce water consumption in snowmaking, support environmentally friendly accommodations and mitigate carbon emissions associated with the events. In 2008, the Beijing Organizing Committee committed to zero net emissions games by the implementation of a Green Olympics with the help of environmental NGOs. In 2012, London's strong commitment to sustainable Games, along with its initiatives for youth engagement and a lasting legacy, contributed to the city's successful bid to host the Summer Olympics. In February 2004, the London 2012 team announced that environmental quality and sustainability are essential components of the London bid. Early on, the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) in London developed a Sustainable Development Strategy to reduce carbon emissions, waste, and water consumption while increasing the use of eco-friendly transportation and products (Collins et al. 2009).

Sustainability has been enshrined in the official claims of mega sporting events, and scholarly debates persist on how to achieve environmental stewardship and a prolonged legacy. Revitalizing the public transportation system with alternative fuel bus technologies has speculated significant environmental and socio-economic benefits to the host nation (Elagouz et al. 2022). The effects of sports mega-events on the host communities could be categorized into positive and negative ones. Most studies have explored subjects inferred from the findings, including socio-economic impacts, tourism, heritage, image, media, hygiene, cultural, and environmental effects. However, other affected has implications by

prostitution-related, psychological, spatial, commercial, voluntary, financial and recreational issues have been rarely considered. Understanding the carbon implications of mega sporting events (MSEs) is critical for the hosting country or city, if they are to tackle climate change challenges. Taking the case of the 2014 Nanjing Youth Olympics (NYO), examining the impacts on the host's local carbon emissions during the 'preparatory-hosting-after' stages of a MSE. By adopting a synthetic control method (SCM) and logarithmic mean divisia index (LMDI) decomposition, the following findings are reached: (1) from 2010, when the city of Nanjing announced the decision to bid to host the NYO, the NYO increased the carbon emissions of Jiangsu (the province to which Nanjing belongs) in every year from 2010 to 2019. The total increase in the emissions caused by the NYO was approximately 584.63 million tons. That figure is 1.65 times the total carbon emissions of the United Kingdom in 2018. (2) The annual amount of increased emissions also rose during the preparatory and post stages of the NYO, but the amount of increased emissions during the hosting year was relatively lower, at 53.36 million tons. (3) The NYO improved the energy intensity of the industrial sector, and thereby partially decreased local carbon emissions. Conversely, the NYO induced continuous impacts on local per capita output, the energy intensity of the transportation sector, the scale and energy structure of the industrial sector, and thus promoted emissions, even after the games (Zhang et al. 2022).

### **Negative Impacts of Mega-sporting Events on the Environment**

From the moment an athlete begins to utilize equipment, clothing, or facilities, there is an "ecological footprint" – an impact on the natural ecosystem. At first glance, a leisure runner's impact may seem insignificant. However, when she joins others on the same pathways, participates in local races, drives to events to participate in or watch, and purchases shoes and clothing, her footprint expands. Mega-events, on the other hand, are frequently considered as accelerators for tourism and regional development; despite having detrimental environmental and social consequences. Thus, the environmental sustainability of these events has been a major concern in recent years. Generally, UNEP cites the following as some of the most prevalent negative environmental externalities (Zhang et al. 2022, Qi 2009, Chernushenko et al. 2001a, Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Dingle and Mallen 2017, Knott et al. 2015, McCullough and Kellison 2017, Preuss 2011, Preuss 2007):

- Degradation of sensitive ecosystems or scarcity of land for sport.
- Noise and light pollution caused by sport.
- The exploitation of non-renewable resources (fuel, metals, etc.)
- The exploitation of natural resources (water, wood, etc.)
- Greenhouse gas emissions caused by the consumption of electricity and fuel.
- Depletion of the ozone layer due to refrigerants.

- Soil and water contamination from pesticide usage.
- Soil degradation while construction and from attendees.
- Waste accumulation from facility buildings and visitors.

Recent studies have looked at the negative environmental consequences of events and ways to make them more environmentally friendly. According to Yang and Xu (2014), adopting a green theme can help to bring some ecological benefits. However, the environmental consequences of mega-events are still significant. Schmied et al. (2007) discussed the negative environmental impacts of large sporting events in Table 1 based on the type of the sport and event.

**Table 1.** *Environmentally Related Elements of the Large Athletic Event (Adopted from Schmied et al. 2007)*

Mega sporting event	Environmental Impacts									
Marathon/ Triathlon/ Runs	Climate	Transport	Energy	Waste	Consumption of resources	Water/ Wastewater	Nature and Landscape	Noise	Catering	Merchandising
Cycling and Motor Sport										
Skiing										
Riding										
Football										
Water Games										
Golf										
Beach Volleyball										
Athletics										
Boxing										
Tennis										
Others										

According to this study, refurbished and new buildings including sports facilities are extremely detrimental to the environment, which increases greenhouse gas emissions. The event's carbon emissions can be significant, prompting some organizers to acquire carbon offsets in an attempt to mitigate the impact (Porteshawver 2009). For the first time, the greenhouse gas emissions were intended to be offset by projects in India and South Africa at the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany, (Schmied et al. 2007). In addition, mega-events also generate massive amounts of trash and food waste from attendees and increase energy and water consumption for restrooms and irrigating fields and surrounding regions. Outdoor sports facilities use millions of gallons of water, putting pressure on local water supplies, as well as using hazardous pesticides can pollute soil and contaminate run-off into the water, threatening employees, players, and animals. This is in addition to the energy use, deforestation, pollution, and waste associated with the construction of parking spaces, houses, and other long-term constructions. Construction required raw materials, freshwater, energy, and wood harvested for non-fuel purposes. Non-recycled steel is also still utilized in conventional stadiums. Moreover, many adhesives and paints include hazardous compounds such as lead and isocyanates (Porteshawver 2009). Transfers made by athletes, teams, and fans (Schmied et al. 2007), and construction materials carried long distances on a truck to and from venues release an enormous amount of greenhouse

gases (Porteshawver 2009). Tweeter and the audience's bustle and water sports such as water skiing and motorboat racing can cause noise and water pollution, respectively (Kou and Shen 2014). Collins et al. (2007) examined the environmental impact of a large event- the Football Association Challenge Cup Final. According to the study, the average visitor creates a footprint seven times larger than an individual doing normal activity. The primary cause of this dramatic rise is the changes in consumption patterns of participants and event guests, with travel to and from the event being the most significant change and consumption of food and drink and producing waste, accounting for the next largest share of the footprint.

Müller et al. (2021) observed that there is no systematic evaluation of Olympic sustainability. They assess the long-term sustainability of the summer and Winter Olympics from 1992 to 2020. The overall sustainability of the Olympic Games, according to their research, is moderate and has decreased over time. During this timeframe, Salt Lake City (2002) had the most sustainable Olympic Games, whereas, Sochi (2014) and Rio de Janeiro (2016) had the least. Interestingly, cities including Vancouver and London, which have portrayed themselves as sustainable Olympic Games models and have counseled other Olympic hosts on sustainability, were ranked below average. Finally, they recommended that reducing the size of the event, rotating the Olympics among the same cities, and enhancing sustainable governance can contribute to improvements in sustainability. Considering the complexity of social and environmental issues caused by mega sporting events, Warren (2020) believed that a one-size-fits-all solution is impossible to implement. Rowberg and Rincker (2019) reviewed Rio 2016's nine sustainability dimensions, which include water purification and conservation, environmental consciousness, consumption, and renewable energy management, carbon-neutral games, air quality and transportation, soil and ecosystem protection, environmentally-friendly design and construction, biodiversity, reforestation and culture, shopping and environmental certification and waste treatment. They concluded that the dimensions are not separate from one another. Reflecting on the environment itself, there is spillover from one negative dimension to another, such as Tokyo 2020 not obtaining its timber sustainably.

#### *Sustainable Solutions for Sport Events*

Given the fact that the negative effects of sporting events on various parts, including the environment, are not visible in the short term, and scientific research on operational strategies is limited, scholars have recently proposed the following solutions for organizing and maintaining climate-friendly sporting events. According to Ma and Kaplanidou sports event legacies are summarized as economic, social, and environmental. Although the majority of legacy categories have a positive connotation, negative event legacies such as financial, social, political, and environmental should also be considered. since failing to pay attention to them may have an impact on people's quality of life in the future (Ma and Kaplanidou 2016). Over the years, various events have attempted but failed to

develop the image and reputation of truly green events. The 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, for example, were called the green event by the Organizing Committee, although this was only partially accurate because, for instance, neither wind farms were employed nor was the solar energy be used in the buildings (Griese et al. 2017). Based on the review of relevant event marketing journals, Griese et al. (2017) compiled guidance on current approaches that can help avoid future greenwashing activities. However, they focused on the sustainability of the event itself rather than addressing a sustainable agenda that could be communicated to the audience and influence their values. That is why it is necessary to investigate whether events can raise awareness of climate change. Sports activities are one way to accomplish this purpose. Traditionally, the call for climate change has been conveyed through tourism as part of place branding (Jayawardena et al. 2013, Capstick et al. 2017, Spector 2017). When it comes to sporting events, researchers tend to concentrate on the sport's environmental sustainability (Dingle 2009, Paul and Lowes 2009). For instance, Dingle (2009) investigated the advantages of implementing green technologies into racing cars. Paul and Lowes (2009) discussed the fairness of holding racing events and their impact on the sustainability of the city and its residents in general. However, over the recent decades, the sport has already become a platform for addressing key social concerns and has proven to be an engaging platform, such as promoting equal rights for men and women in tennis (Orr et al. 2020) or protesting racism in the National Football League (NFL) and other sports (Schmidt et al. 2018). Swart et al. (2021) investigated the sustainability of major sports events in Dubai, they only contributed to the development of Dubai's overall branding and the image of sports events from a tourism viewpoint, nevertheless, and they did not cover the public's awareness of global issues. At the dawn of the Olympic Games, snow was not an issue for winter competitions. However, since the mid-50s, natural snow has been in short supply, forcing organizers to use artificial snow (McCullough et al. 2020, Sports 2020). Before the 1964 Olympics, thousands of tons of artificial snow were transported from different regions to the ski slopes of Innsbruck by army trucks and Austrian troops trampled it with their boots for several days. Since the late 1980s, special equipment has been extensively used for the production of artificial snow. In addition, in the 1950s and 1960s, the Olympic competitions of hockey players and figure skaters were moved from open-air sites to the premises to prevent difficulties with melting ice (McCullough et al. 2020, Sports 2020). In the 70s, bobsleigh and luge tracks were artificially cooled. In Vancouver 2010, further cooling of the jumping jumps was required (McCullough et al. 2020). Even well-known athletes were trying to draw public attention to environmental issues. "Something that terrifies every winter athlete daily is the fact that the conditions are not as good as they used to be. You see videos of people skiing on glaciers back in the '80s and '70s, and half of that glacier doesn't even exist anymore"-admits world champion in ski acrobatics Jon Lillis. Actually, Environmental Sustainability (ES) is at the forefront of the focus of governments, international organizations, and industries, associated with the motoring industry. Chernushenko et al. (2001b, p. 4) point out that any sport can be considered as sustainable if "it meets the needs of today's sporting communities while contributing to the

improvement of future sports opportunities for all and the improvement of the integrity of the natural and social environment on which it depends". Motorsport marketing seeks strategies to make the sport truly sustainable (Robeers and Bulck 2018). The most obvious solution to reduce the final combustion product (CO<sub>2</sub>) is to replace combustion engines in automobiles with electric ones. The electric racing series, ABB FIA Formula E was designed to implement and promote such sustainable practices (Robeers and Bulck 2018, Sports 2020a). Pointing out that air pollution is the most serious environmental threat to human health today, the series has been both a marketing and experimental ground for electric vehicles since 2012, promoting electric mobility and clean energy solutions to help decrease air pollution and combat climate change worldwide (Robeers and Bulck 2018, Sports 2020). All Formula E cars are powered by lithium-ion batteries, which there is less noise and no carbon emissions. The energy used to charge the batteries must be "clean", thus all the electricity for Formula E cars is generated by glycerin generators that operate on biodiesel derived from plant waste. This enables racing on temporary city-center circuits or even in existing pavilions (Kew 2021, Robeers and Bulck 2018) and possibly educates attendants of all ages about the future and benefits of electric vehicles, addressing the problem raised by Orr et al. (2020).

Finally, Thomson et al. (2013) highlighted that it is critical to remember that inadequate planning of the events' legacies in host cities (Glebova and Desbordes 2022) or regions may lead to long-term negative economic, social, and environmental effects. Hence, it is necessary to assess, evaluate and manage both positive and negative legacies, while considering all stakeholders in order to maximize the positive and minimize the potential negative results inherited (Glebova et al. 2022).

## **Methodology**

### *Data Collection*

This paper explores the sustainable measurements against the negative externalities of the Olympic Games through qualitative interviews synthesized with literature review. Face-to-face interviews with experts might be a beneficial technique for gathering important data. In order to talk with the experts who provide the most value to this research, the snowball sampling approach was adopted in which respondents put you in touch with other experts (Baker 2006, Baker and Edwards 2012). As a sample, fifteen experts (N=15) from diverse backgrounds and sectors (government, universities, sports associations and environmental institutions) were selected and the interview processes were carried out until the theoretical saturation was attained. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all the interviews were performed remotely through skype or messenger (call/chat). It should be noted that the language of the interview was English and also each interview lasted between 20 to 40 minutes, and the primary question was addressed: "What is your opinion about sustainable initiatives for mitigating the negative environmental effects of mega-sporting events?"

*Data Analysis*

Data were then transcribed verbatim using a voice recorder. The qualitative approach enables us to present detailed textual explanations of how we might advance towards sustainable mega-sporting events. For the next step, the data from previous research and interviews were coded inductively. Finally, after reviewing the transcripts to ensure the relevance and meaning of these concepts and themes, they were synthesized and analyzed in order to finalize the research findings.

**Results**

Based on previous studies, we assumed that mega-sporting events were harmful to the environment since the economic effects will ultimately exceed the environmental ones. A huge event such as the Olympics will always have an environmental impact; this study highlighted some of the ecologically beneficial alternatives, which are outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *Extracted Components through Interviews and Investigation of Past Research*

	Domain		
1	Infrastructure and construction	Keeping games out of protected areas, wilderness and agricultural land	(Chemushenko et al. 2001b, Kou and Shen 2014)
		Shifting Winter Games away from mountain resorts towards cross-country ski venue	(Chappelet 2008, TUNZA 2012)
		Installing physical barriers to protect vulnerable ecosystems, plants and water bodies	(Chemushenko et al. 2001b, Yang and Xu 2014)
		Construction of multiple-use facilities	(Chemushenko et al. 2001b, Kou and Shen 2014, Stadhouders 2010, TUNZA 2012)
		Depending on the climate, design structures to optimize solar gain or to protect against it	(Chemushenko et al. 2001b, Kou and Shen 2014, Schmied et al. 2007)
		Implementation of green roofs	(Porteshawver 2009, Warren 2020, TUNZA 2012, Zhang et al. 2022)
		Rotating the Olympics among the same cities	(Müller et al. 2021)
		Construction of ecological shelter forest belt and green belt	(Yang and Xu 2014, Karlsson 2009, TUNZA 2012)
		Enhancing the quality of the sidewalks surrounding stadium by using recycled rubber asphalt	(Porteshawver 2009)
		Carbon neutrality by reforestation	(Rowberg and Rincker 2019)
		Providing temporary accommodation by using cruise ships in the harbors	(Stadhouders 2010)
		Implementation of movable pool floor	(Stadhouders 2010)
		Avoid events during breeding season	(Schmied et al. 2007)
	Installation of nesting boxes for bats and birds	(TUNZA 2012)	

2	Transportation	Encouraging carpooling, and human-powered commuting	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Stadhouders 2010, Schmied et al. 2007)
		Free or special prices offer for public transport	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Porteshawver 2009, Yang and Xu 2014, Karlsson 2009, Schmied et al. 2007, TUNZA 2012)
3	Waste management	Composting organic waste	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, TUNZA 2012)
		Construction waste and materials removed during renovation can be reused, sold or donate	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Schmied et al. 2007, TUNZA 2012)
4	Materials management	Reduce the use of materials that deplete natural resources or pollute the environment	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Collins et al. 2009, Kou and Shen 2014, Schmied et al. 2007)
		Avoid ozone-depleting chemicals	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b)
		Use of plasticized signboards with removable printed mark that can be reused	(Chernushenko et al. 2001a, TUNZA 2012)
5	Energy and water conservation	Installing or updating to energy-efficient equipment such as heat pumps or geothermal technology or utilizing wind and biomass energy	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Collins et al. 2009, Kou and Shen 2014, Porteshawver 2009, Stadhouders 2010, Warren 2020, Yang and Xu 2014, Schmied et al. 2007, TUNZA 2012)
		Shifting from electricity or oil to natural gas	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Yang and Xu 2014, Karlsson 2009, Schmied et al. 2007)
		Minimizing air leakage by closing off any unnecessary openings (doors, windows)	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Porteshawver 2009, Schmied et al. 2007)
		maximizing natural light and installing energy-efficient lighting and/or solar panels	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Porteshawver 2009, Warren 2020, Yang and Xu 2014, Schmied et al. 2007, TUNZA 2012)
		Installing low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Porteshawver 2009, Yang and Xu 2014, Schmied et al. 2007, TUNZA 2012)
		Storing rainwater and gray water for irrigation purposes	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Porteshawver 2009, Stadhouders 2010, Karlsson 2009, Schmied et al. 2007, TUNZA 2012)
		Establish vegetation buffers surrounding bodies of water to effectively absorb runoff and decrease erosion.	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Stadhouders 2010, TUNZA 2012)
6	Merchandising and procurement	Paperless games	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Stadhouders 2010)
		Use recycled paper and vegetable-based inks in case of printing	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Schmied et al. 2007, TUNZA 2012)
		Providing ecologically friendly packaging or returnable packaging	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Schmied et al. 2007)
		Designing giveaways to be reusable at future events	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Schmied et al. 2007)
		Alternative gifts such as a service or a gesture instead of material objects	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b)
		Creating Olympic medals out of recycled metals from donated gadgets	(Rowberg and Rincker 2019)
		Using recyclable materials to create team uniforms	(Warren 2020, TUNZA 2012)
7	Catering and food services	Use reusable coffee filters	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b)
		Donating acceptable food to food banks or local kitchens	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Schmied et al. 2007, TUNZA 2012)
		Use of a durable mug for all participants (athletes, spectators and employees)	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, Schmied et al. 2007, TUNZA 2012)
		Using waxed paper instead of plates for fast food	(Chernushenko et al. 2001b, TUNZA 2012)
		Preparation of biological and healthy food	(Stadhouders 2010, Schmied et al. 2007, TUNZA 2012)



## Discussion and Conclusion

### *Key Findings and Theoretical Implications*

Based on the analysis, now it is possible to answer the main research question. The basic research question aimed at finding out what factors may negatively influence the environment through sport event. To the best of our knowledge, there are few studies on how events, in a particular mega sporting event, can negatively affect the environment. Consequently, due to the novelty of the phenomenon studied and the basis of the literature related to the topic under study, suggestions, and solutions for improving the environment and reducing the negative effects of sporting events were extracted. These data were collected through the library research method and interviews with experts (Table 2).

One of the most important and influential findings on improving the environment was infrastructure and construction. In fact, unprincipled constructions and poor quality infrastructure are among the negative and influential factors on the environment which should be considered by the Managers of sporting events. This factor agrees with (Porteshawver 2009, Yang and Xu 2014, Rowberg and Rincker 2019, Warren 2020, Müller et al. 2021).

One of the important suggestions for improving the environment is energy and water conservation since these strategies can be used to prevent the wastage of resources and energy. Installing or upgrading energy-efficient equipment such as heat pumps or geothermal technologies or utilizing wind and biomass energy, shifting from electricity or oil to natural gas, minimizing air leakage by sealing any unnecessary openings (doors, windows), and planting vegetation buffers surrounding bodies of water to effectively absorb runoff and decrease erosion are examples of water and energy conservation at host venues.

### *Managerial Implications*

Mega sporting events, from the Olympics to the World Cup, provide entertainment for tens of thousands of people but can also provoke intense debate and controversy. One of the most important challenges is the negative impact of sporting events on the environment, which is less addressed.

Simply, reducing the amount of environmental damage caused by an event does not always suggest a long-term benefit to the environment. Beyond the event itself, this would necessitate a transformation in understanding, attitudes, and/or behaviors (Glebova et al. 2022). As a result, the major challenge is determining how the event might encourage such improvements. The eco-friendly measures taken by the event organizers serve as examples and messages in and of themselves. Environmental stewardship may be demonstrated by implementing environmentally-friendly regulations and practices. Using environmentally friendly products or policies to limit greenhouse gas emissions, for instance, are examples of efforts to highlight those solutions and their benefits. Simple environmental suggestions, such as recycling bins for event visitors or promoting public transport to the events, can also help to raise awareness of the need for environmentally

responsible behavior. The emerging environmental challenge is to identify synergies between the environmental regulations of the event and the message (including lessons) it conveys, whether on-site or through advertising and reporting (Woodside and Martin 2008).

In order to achieve successful sustainable Games, the organizing committee must establish a strategy that is appealing to the IOC, the host community, and major interest groups in the city before the Games. Moreover, creating multiple functions buildings can serve as long-term examples of sustainable development.

Providing a legislative framework that includes critical features such as full disclosure and transparency of procedures and data; full social inclusion in decision-making; continuous interaction and commitment to sustainability; and the sustainability of community investments. Implementing these fundamental aspects will develop community engagement prior to, during, and after the event, provide a sense of ownership over the event, promote sustainable environmental and energy policies and prevent event seizure. In addition, procedural requirements for public disclosure, debate, involvement, and potentially even veto power should be included in host cities. However, in the absence of a pre-existing legal framework, host cities will remain subject to potentially negative environmental and social externalities (Warren 2020). In a general, we may say: First, research has shown that while sporting event is a good way to address environmental improvement, it is still unknown to the fan community and even managers, so their downsides should not be overlooked. Additionally, throughout data collection, we were unable to find negative remarks in research and interviews for any mega sports event related to the environment. To reduce the negative impacts of sports events on the environment the first step might be to conduct market research on fans and spectators to ensure they understand the series and the environmental message transmitted within it.

Second, even if the mega sporting events are considered to have any negative effect on the environment, they have the potential to raise awareness of environmental change. It is a good sign that environmental topics are possible to be addressed and should be considered within the sports event. For practitioners, this implies that other series may invest time and financial resources in addressing sustainable/climate innovations/ agenda. Climate change and environmental concerns are relevant to the fan community, which is why the sports event can incorporate actions to address these issues into their sustainability strategy to inspire fans by acknowledging the important role they can play in combating climate change.

It seems managers and authorities of sports and the environment do not care about environmental issues due to a lack of knowledge and awareness of the negative impacts of sporting events. More practical actions such as partnering with climate organizations during race weekends or representing athletes as long-term ambassadors who not only talk about climate change and environmental issues, but also promote environmentally friendly technology and sustainability as F1 world champions Nico Rosberg and Sebastian Vettel do (Baldwin 2021, Lewin 2021).

To this end, sport, in general, may play a significant role in tackling climate change. Over the last few decades, sports have already made a positive contribution to resolving major societal challenges such as racial equality and justice. Since sports broadcasts have a larger audience than environmental documentaries, they would help people understand what is happening on the planet. The sports community may also create a positive climate legacy by setting up global and local marketing campaigns in collaboration with fan communities led by famous athletes. But the words are not enough. Practical initiatives may include using of sustainable materials and electric vehicles for major sports events such as the Olympic Games.

#### *Limitations and Further Research Directions*

The following points represent the pitfalls of this study which may also be considered areas for future research.

First of all, this study mainly focused on the negative impact of mega sports events on the environment. Although this issue and its study can help the research literature and organizers of sporting events, particularly managers and environmental researchers, very limited information and research have been conducted in this field. In addition, due to the coronavirus pandemic and distance restrictions between countries face-to-face interviews with most experts were not possible. Therefore, a more diverse and statistically stronger sample of the population, as well as the opinions of managers and experts of other nationalities, needs to be examined.

Secondly, the study explores addressing environmental challenges only within the context of mega sports events. However, due to the different impacts of sports on the environment, more disruptive sports must be studied in this scenario. Taking into account that sports have already succeeded as an engaging platform for addressing major social issues, such as supporting equal rights for men and women in tennis (Orr et al. 2020) or protesting against racism in the National Football League (NFL), future studies may focus on how these sports may cope with environmental hazards.

Thirdly, it is recommended that the scores of those related to sustainability and environmental awareness among the criteria taken into consideration when giving the Olympic Games or major sports organizations.

Finally, due to time and resource constraints, alternative methodologies could not be used within the collecting and analysis stage. Future studies may test the same constructs to reveal more sophisticated and interesting outcomes based on advanced soft and analysis techniques.

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## **Perceived Effects of Olympic Success on International Policies and Prestige: A Case Study of Sports Actors from Iran**

*By Fateme Zare\* & Gábor Géczi\**

*For some nations where these events cannot be facilitated, Olympic success would be more significant. Governments often believe that winning medals enhances their image globally, which is their reason to invest and intervene in elite sports. Based on this belief, the researchers tried to determine how sports actors perceive the relationship between elite sporting success and prestige and its reflection on their related policies. To achieve this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Iranian sports officials and sport managers in charge of elite sports. The results identified four themes in interviewees' speeches related to the objective of the study, including (1) sporting success at the Olympic Games and international prestige, (2) fairness and international prestige, (3) sport and diplomatic relations, (4) media coverage and international prestige. Taken together, these results suggest that the concept of international prestige is notably essential when it comes to the country where the international image might not be positive toward that particular country. Sports as a soft power tool can play this role and build a positive image for that country in different ways. The findings contribute to elite sporting success, sports and country image research, sports international prestige, and sports diplomacy in Iran.*

**Keywords:** *Olympic success, international prestige, fairness, diplomatic relations, media coverage*

### **Introduction**

In recent years, there has been an increasing attention toward elite sports. States intervene increasingly in the financing and organization of Olympic elite sport (Grix and Carmichael 2012, Haut et al. 2017), and governments frequently are motivated by a quest for international image and prestige (Hubbert 2013, Liu 2020, Park et al. 2012, Silk 2013, Tan and Houlihan 2013). In particular, having high prestige levels can be considered as a source of states' soft power through which states can convert resources into policy outcomes (Grix 2014, Nye 2008). In this context, soft power has been defined as the power of persuasion, whereby one actor in a non-coercive manner convinces another to want the same things he/she wants (Nye 2004, p. 8). Thus, government officials use international sports to establish their nation's legitimacy in the international sphere, and they often believe that winning medals enhances their image globally (Kidd 1991). Governments fund sports and sport facilities to boost the profile of a city or nation. Accordingly, they often become caught in a cycle where increased funding is regularly required to

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compete with other cities and countries doing the same thing with bigger budgets or newer facilities (Hall 2006, Topič and Coakley 2010).

Houlihan (2000) conducted a survey demonstrating that one of the purposes of government involvement in sports promotes the power and prestige of a group, community, or nation. This is especially the case for cities and countries that host mega sports events such as the FIFA World Cups and the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Booth 2011, Schausteck de Almeida et al. 2015). For others, where they do not have the prerequisites and opportunity of hosting sport mega-events (SME), gaining recognition and prestige through success at the Olympic Games is more important to governments and sport policymakers. Currently, Iran does not have the basic requirements for hosting sport mega-events. In the same vein, Eydi and Yousefi (2017, p. 171) identified some weaknesses including: transportation systems, infrastructures and sports venues, human resources, management, economic sanctions by western countries, unstable government support, and lack of international lobbying power. Meanwhile, their study found several strengths such as support of Iranian people, security, tourism attraction, geographic situation, infrastructure, and economic potential. Iran used to hold sport mega-events, but with the current conditions, it may not be able to host sport mega-events and benefit from hosting these events to enhance its image worldwide. As a result, success and exemplary performance in mega events like the Olympic Games have become more important to Iran. In other words, striving for success may be considered as the only option to increase international prestige. However, the fact that nations can raise their international prestige by performing well in the Olympics (Haut et al. 2017, p. 311) indicated that the formula of 'more success, more prestige' is overly simplistic. Indeed, in some cases, investment in the staging of sporting mega-events and athletic achievement can also result in reputational damage to nations like Qatar regarding the human rights and migrant workers (Al Thani 2021).

As noted by De Bosscher et al. (2009), elite sporting success can increase national pride, and the international prestige of a country as well. Successes in elite sports would be useful in the domestic and international contexts. In academic research, it is often argued that elite sports can be utilized for both 'soft power at home and abroad,' which means that sports as a tool of soft power is not limited to the realm of foreign policy; it can also be employed domestically to build peace and nationhood (Nygård and Gates 2013). Different nations in the early years of the modern Olympic Games considered the competition as an opportunity to shape their international image (Freeman 2012, Reiche 2013). For example, the 2008 Beijing Olympics were seen as a way for China to boost its soft power and a positive image to the rest of the globe (Manzenreiter 2010).

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the correlations of national pride and elite sporting success (Gassmann et al. 2020, Hallmann et al. 2013, Meier and Mutz 2018, Storm and Jakobsen 2020). However, there is a relatively small body of literature that is concerned with international prestige and soft power. For example, in relation to the roles of country image, nation branding, and public diplomacy, Dubinsky (2019a) examined them through the evolution of the modern Olympic Movement, and identified how countries used the Olympic Games to improve their image in different periods. Moreover, in terms of societal



outcomes, governments - in order to legitimize their policies and investments - believe that elite sport achievement encourages a wide range of good societal impacts that 'trickle down' (De Bosscher et al. 2021, p. 1).

Recent study by De Rycke and De Bosscher (2019) also supports previous literatures. They reviewed the literature and have identified and clustered 79 societal impacts from the literature review into 10 categories. The categories represented: 1. Social equality and inclusion; 2. Collective identity and pride; 3. Ethics and fair play; 4. Feel good and passion; 5. Fans and (media) attraction; 6. International prestige and image; 7. Athletes' ability and quality of life; 8. Sport participation and health; 9. Sponsors and commercial activity; and 10. Local consumption and living conditions. The framework of their study has considered prestige and image in Category 6. What is new in their study was the identification of both potentially positive and negative impacts. Thus, compared to these rather extensively investigated aspects, the possible effects of sporting success on international prestige are under-researched and overestimated in many cases. The research problem derived from a thorough review of pertinent research associated with soft power, international image, prestige and elite sporting success. Reviewing the relevant literature revealed gaps in understanding the topic in our context. As a result, this research tries to fill this knowledge gap and determine if a similar study could be applied under research context (country Iran) with a different sample.

To date, some empirical studies address a broader range of these aspects (Breuer and Hallmann 2011, Breuer et al. 2017, Haut et al. 2020, Haut et al. 2017, Haut et al. 2016). Accordingly, the main objective of this article was to investigate how sport actors including Iranian sports officials and sport managers perceive the relationship between elite sporting success and international prestige. Although some research has been carried out on elite sporting success and international prestige, no single study exists which would explicitly focus on our question. Nevertheless, previous research, like Haut et al. (2017) suggested multi-national studies in order to allow for a comparative perspective. The research question was derived from the other research suggestions. In particular, this study seeks to address the following research question: how do sports actors perceive the relationship between elite sporting success and international prestige, and how do they reflect that on the success/failure of their related policies?

## **Literature Review**

The theoretical framework that underpins this paper centres on sports diplomacy and the concept of soft power. Countries apply public diplomacy and soft power to achieve their national and international goals. With regard to the role of soft power, Nye (2004) argued that the three main sources of soft power are culture, political values and foreign policy, and according to him, soft power is one of the key concepts in considering public diplomacy and country image. Sports have been used as a tool for public diplomacy by politicians for many years to attain their international goals (Boykoff 2016). Moreover, sports provide a platform for countries to participate in a 'global sporting arms race' (De Bosscher

et al. 2008) for international reputation through means other than military and economic power.

Public diplomacy refers to the process by which international organizations engage with foreign publics to attain foreign policy objectives (Dubinsky 2019b) and some scholars view public diplomacy as a mean of soft power (Hukil 2015). Countries utilize sports for their public diplomacy to achieve their goals in different aspects like society, politics and finance to improve the image of a given country. Previous studies (Dubinsky 2019a, 2019b, Dubinsky and Dzikus 2019) have explored the relationships between soft power and public diplomacy in the context of sports as an instrument to improve the image of country. Countries from the Western Bloc and the Soviet Union used the Olympic Games for public diplomacy to achieve international goals and showcase their power. Public diplomacy has a long history as a tool for enhancing a country's soft power. Indeed, public diplomacy can play an important role to create an attractive image of a country (Nye 2008).

According to sports diplomacy studies, on one hand, sports play a diplomatic role by promoting cooperation such as 'ping pong diplomacy' (Carter and Sugden 2012). The game of table tennis has led to formal relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China. Murray and Pigman (2014, p. 1115) stated that 'international sport is used as an instrument of diplomacy by governments can generate important prescriptive conclusions that can enable governments to apply sports for diplomatic purposes more effectively'. In contrast, Coakley (2017) has another attitude toward the connection between sports and diplomacy, he states that sports have no impact in the realm of 'serious' diplomacy, which consists of discussions and decisions about political issues of vital national interest.

On the other hand, sports became a platform for political boycotts such as those between the Olympic boycotts of the United States and the Soviet Union during the 1980s (Murray 2012, Murray and Pigman 2014) and political exclusions, like in the case of South Africa, which was excluded from the Olympic Movement while it was under the Apartheid Regime (MacLean 2014). As for boycotting the Olympic Games, Iran is the only country that boycotted two consecutive Olympics, the 1980 and 1984 Olympics. Another issue that can arise here is asylum seekers. Since World War II, athletes have applied for asylum in almost every Olympic Games in the host country. Cold War policies provided an opportunity for Western countries to welcome asylum seekers from the Eastern Bloc, in 1956 after the Melbourne Olympics 61 athletes decided not to return to their home countries. Another example would be, at the 2012 London Olympics, athletes from Cameroon, Sudan, and Ethiopia sought refuge there (Kenny 2018).

Improving country image, 'the cognitive representation that a person holds about a given country' (Kunczik 2003, p. 412), is one of the foreign policy goals. Research on country image is traced back to the 1970s. The study of country image is multidisciplinary (Buhmann and Ingenhoff 2015), impacted by a variety of fields, particularly sociology, psychology, political science, business management and communications. In terms of country image in the Olympic Games, Dubinsky and Dzikus (2019) identified two major themes including: national identity and sports and international politics regarding Israel's country image. It is not surprising

that the two biggest superpowers and their allies identified sports and especially the Olympic Movement as a tool to reach international goals and improve the country's image. Since the end of World War II, countries have used the Olympic Games for political purposes to rebuild their cities, infrastructure, and technologies, and to attain national and international goal (Dubinsky 2019a). During the decades after World War II, the political use of Olympic Games became more sophisticated, with countries using both hard power and soft power (Nye 2008) to achieve foreign policy goals through the Olympic Movement. Nye (2004) defined hard power as military and economic capabilities, since these are the main tools that can pose threats or incentives, while the existing literature on soft power and enhancing the country image is extensive and focuses particularly on political aspects of sport. Recently, more scholars attempt to scrutinize the societal impacts of elite sport (For example, De Rycke and De Bosscher 2019).

Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) noted the potential of the Olympic Games for nation branding and image enhancement back to the first modern Olympic history. Freeman (2012, p. 1263) defined nation-branding, 'a practice used by states to build and manage their reputations'. Moreover, nation-building is defined by Cha (2008) as a sense of unity and identity. Regarding the difference between nation branding and place branding, Ginesta and de San Eugenio (2014) stated that the connection between nation branding, public diplomacy, and international relations is stronger than that of other place brands. In this light, Szondi (2008) stated that nation branding can be considered a special case of place branding.

Freeman (2012) emphasized that hosting multinational sporting events and international sporting success can simultaneously contribute to both nation building and national branding, and it creates a sense of self-importance, international recognition and prestige. Later, Arning (2013), in his study considered both hosting and participating in sporting events which lead to governments getting international exposure to the competitions and making sports an effective instrument for demonstrating soft power and improving public diplomacy. For instance, in the context of Qatar hosting 15th Asian Games, Khodr (2012) findings suggested that Qatar uses events to reimage and market itself as a destination, raise its international reputation, and acquire a competitive edge in the area.

The use of sports for country image purposes can lead to terrible outcomes in some cases (Dubinsky 2019a). Haut et al. (2017) claimed that not only losing, but even winning unfairly can harm a country's international image. For Iran, one example can be Kimia Alizadeh, taekwondo competitor, who made history after winning a bronze medal in the 57 kg category at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. She became the first Iranian woman to win an Olympic medal. Alizadeh, in January 2020, announced that she was leaving Iran permanently for Europe (News 2020). Also, she does not intend to compete for Iran in the 2021 Summer Olympics and expressed a desire to compete for her current country of residence, Germany. In 2021, she has received refugee status in Germany.

International sporting success also contributes to some societal impacts like wellbeing, happiness, life satisfaction, sport-related national pride (Hallmann et al. 2013, Pawlowski et al. 2014), and international prestige (Haut et al. 2017) as well. During the Cold War, the Eastern and Western Blocs fought to demonstrate the

superiority of their system through delivering sporting success (D'Agati 2013). Storm and Jakobsen (2020) contend that powerful nations in modern-day Olympics such as the US, China, and Russia still compete to obtain most gold, silver, and bronze medals. Based on this, both hosting sport mega-events and obtaining the most medals is of highest importance for hosting nations. Regarding the importance of international sporting success from the population's perspective, Humphreys et al. (2018) estimated the population's willingness to pay for sporting achievement. They revealed that willingness to pay is high and closely associated with Canadians' prestige and pride attached to their athletic performance. However, they concluded that their results do not necessarily mean the policies of improving the performance of elite athletes pursued by the Canadian government are economically efficient. Similarly, as they stated, their findings should not be used to support increased investment to improve the performance of elite athletes in other nations because that program is Canada's response to an international arms race.

In relation to international prestige, some researchers worked on this tangible effect and soft power. Liu (2020) examines whether and how a country's elite sport success would affect its soft power from an international audience's perspective. The results not only provided empirical evidence of whether Olympic achievement would have affected a country's soft power but offered insights on the mechanisms at work behind that effect. Furthermore, Breuer and Hallmann (2011) find that a substantial part of the German population (78.2 percent) regards athletic performance as important to Germany's reputation abroad.

The general assumption that sporting success positively affects a country's prestige has not often been specified theoretically. It seems clear that performance prestige can only be gained when international rules and standards are respected in line with Reiche (2013) notion. According to him, firstly, gaining prestige might not only require that athletes comply with the written rules, but also with the unwritten standards of fair play. To commit a minor infringement to get an advantage may be considered as clever in one country, but as dirty practice in another, or vice versa, extraordinary acts of fair play may lead to additional prestige. Secondly, concerning doping and corruption, compliance with rules refers not only to athlete's behavior in competition but also to the whole system behind the scenes (Emrich et al. 2014).

The Olympic Games, one of the enormous rituals on a global scale (Real 1996), is known as 'the biggest show on television' (Billings 2008, p. 1) and attracts billions of people worldwide who can watch televised games simultaneously. These global events expose viewers to new people, places, and events they are unfamiliar with. However, the Games are often criticized for repeating pre-existing biases against specific nations (Larson and Rivenburgh 1991). Specific countries or athletes generally receive increased amount of positive media coverage than others, similar to uneven coverage found in reporting international news (Chang 1998). de Moragas et al. (1995) argued that television commentators constructed other nations' images with familiar existing frameworks to their home audiences.

An analysis of NBC primetime telecasts and sports coverage in *The New York Times* found that foreign nations and their athletes were not significantly affected by any given nation's performance during the Olympics. Winning gold medals

does not guarantee higher media visibility for any given country (Hong and Oh 2020). The result that international images are not so easily changed by sporting success may partly reflect a nationalistic bias of sports media coverage (Schallhorn and Beck 2017).

It is necessary to clarify here exactly what is meant by success, De Bosscher et al. (2007) remarks that there are various indicators by which the outputs (success) of an elite athlete production system can be measured. For example, by counting the number of medals won during the Olympic Games or other events; by counting the number of finals achieved (top eight places); by determining the relative success or even the number of participants qualifying to take part in mega events. In this study, success was defined as the number of participants qualifying to participate in the Olympic Games. For Iran, participating in the Olympics and succeeding in it has always been a scene for gaining prestige (Zargar 2015). From the 1948 London Olympics to the 2016 Rio Olympics, Iranian athletes have won 69 medals (19 gold, 22 silver, and 28 bronze).

### *The Structure of Sport in the Islamic Republic of Iran*

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Ministry of Sports and Youth, the National Olympic and Paralympic Committee, and sports federations are involved in elite sports (Sadri Cheraghtape and Jalali Farahani 2020). The vision of sports in the Islamic Republic of Iran is the construction and development of sports in the country to promote health and social vitality, pride in national and international arenas, development of infrastructure, and assistance to the sports industry. Its mission is to promote the level of community health and social vitality, to train the spirit of sportsmanship, to support the scientific and professional development of elite sports with a justice-oriented approach, to organize the country's capacity to identify, support, and strengthen talents and promote their participation in the development of the country (Ghalibaf 2010). Table 1 shows the changes of the central government sport in Iran.

**Table 1.** *The Summary of Evolution/Changes to the Central Government Sport in Iran, 1935-2011 (Dousti et al. 2013)*

Year	Name of organization
1935	National Sports Association
1960	Integration into the Education Ministry
1971	Sports and Recreation Organization
1977	Dissolution and fusion with the Education Ministry
1979	Independent Physical Education Organization (part of the Government)
2011	The Ministry of Sport and Youth

Perhaps the most striking feature of the way the Iranian Government and politicians are involved in sports is the assumption that they can achieve such a wide variety of objectives through sports. According to Rein and Shields (2007), Chen (2012) and Storm and Jakobsen (2020), two specific factors can stimulate international prestige: one is hosting mega sport events, and the other one is being successful on the international stage. As Iran does not have the opportunity of

hosting sport mega-events, like the Olympic Games or Asian Games, another dimension of benefits, in this case, success, would be a matter which governments and people who are in charge of elite sport in Iran consider in their policies.

Together, the above studies indicate that research on international prestige has been primarily concerned with the effect of sporting success. Further, some of the contemporary evidence focuses on nations where they can host mega sporting events and be successful at the Olympic Games, such as China, Germany, USA. Based on this, there is a need for a country like Iran to investigate how important sporting success is and how this matter can affect the Olympic sports policies, where it cannot benefit from the advantages of hosting mega sport events, like the Olympic Games, to improve its international image.

## Methods

Based on an interpretivist epistemological framework, a qualitative research design has been employed that draws on, and evaluates, the subjective perspectives of key stakeholders (Flyvbjerg 2006).

### *Sample*

A total of 10 stakeholders in sports from Iranian sports officials and sport managers participated in this study, including Iran’s national Olympic committee members, high-performance directors of summer Olympic federations, and sport managers in charge of the elite sport in Iran. The sampling technique was convenience sampling, in which members of the target population meet specific practical criteria, like easy accessibility, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate (Dörnyei and Griffee 2010). The interviewees were selected according to their position within the sport organizations that had at least 10 years of experience in elite sport management, and their availability and willingness to participate in this study. Further, the reason for the 10 samples was to reach saturation, which means the researchers noted that participants were talking about similar ideas and further interviews would not reveal new information. The following table shows the demographics of the interviewees.

**Table 2.** *Demographics of the Interviewees*

#	Participant’s position	Level of education
<b>Interview 1</b>	Sport manager- former Vice Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports	Ph.D.
<b>Interview 2</b>	Member of NOC I.R IRAN	Ph.D.
<b>Interview 3</b>	Former member of the Executive Committee of the Asian Football Confederation and Sport manager	Ph.D.
<b>Interview 4</b>	Member of volleyball federation	Ph.D.
<b>Interview 5</b>	Sport manager- volleyball vice president	Ph.D.
<b>Interview 6</b>	Member of weightlifting federation	Master holder
<b>Interview 7</b>	Member of wrestling federation	Ph.D.
<b>Interview 8</b>	Member of NOC I.R IRAN	Ph.D.
<b>Interview 9</b>	Member of NOC I.R IRAN	Ph.D.
<b>Interview 10</b>	Member of track & field federation	Ph.D.

### *Procedures*

The interview questions are derived from the previous relevant studies (Roberts 2020). After reviewing the literature to identify what has been explored before in the research topic and discussion with the researcher who had been working on the same topic, we have prepared questions to address the research goals. Besides, the interview questions were reviewed and modified twice to ensure the questions were unbiased and address the specific research question. The seven questions were, therefore, broadly formulated (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006, Hsieh and Shannon 2005), for example, 'Do you think participating at the Olympic Games affects a country's prestige, and how?' The interview protocol was developed and pilot-tested by a panel of three academics with considerable expertise in the elite sport context to ensure content validity. Revisions in the interview protocol were made based on their feedback. Moreover, the questions were in Farsi (Persian), the interviewee's native language, to understand questions correctly. Interviews were conducted through Skype (call/chat), lasting from 15 to 25 minutes. The data were collected in 2020 by recording semi-structured interviews via Skype. The transcripts were translated from Farsi to English.

### *Data Analysis*

Data were analysed thematically, applying the approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) in order to identify common themes of meaning that come up repeatedly. Clarke and Braun (2014) define a thematic analysis (TA) as a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data. In our analysis to identify the themes, we utilised a theoretical or deductive or 'top down' approach (Boyatzis 1998) in the thematic analysis. Based on this approach, themes were generated by pre-interview information, insight, and the previous studies on the topic.

The researchers analysed the interview transcripts using Braun and Clarke (2006) six phases of thematic analysis:

- (1) Familiarization with the data: in this step, we read the transcripts as a whole to get familiar with them. We also re-read the transcripts again one by one very carefully.
- (2) Generating initial coding: we labeled (code) relevant pieces, such as words, phrases, sentences in the transcripts called coding based on repetition in several places or perhaps, the interviewees explicitly stated that this is important and have read about something similar in previous published scientific articles
- (3) Generating themes: we looked over the codes that we created, and started coming up with themes. Also, we combined several codes into a single theme. At this stage, we decided that some of our codes are too vague or not relevant enough, so they were discarded.

- (4) Reviewing themes: in this step, we attempted to make sure that the themes are useful and accurate representations of the data. For this, we returned to the data set and compared our themes against it.
- (5) Defining and naming themes: we did this step to formulate precisely what we mean by each theme and figure out how it helps us understand the data.
- (6) Producing the report: finally, we conceptualized the data towards research results.

Concerning trustworthiness, we have reviewed data, codes, and themes throughout the data analysis process. This process helped to clarify the data and codes throughout the development of the themes. We then presented the final themes to the participants to obtain additional perspectives and help improve clarity.

## Results

After the thematic analysis of data, four themes emerged in interviewees' speeches that were connected to the study's goals, which were about how sport actors perceive the relationship between elite sporting success and prestige and its reflection on the success/failure of their related policies: (1) sporting success at the Olympic Games and international prestige, (2) fairness and international prestige, (3) sport and diplomatic relations, (4) media coverage and international prestige. The themes are described below and supported by participant quotes. Some themes and their codes are depicted in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *Codes and Themes of Data*

Interview extract	Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Both taking part and winning a medal will improve Iran's international prestige. (Interview1).</li> <li>•The more successful a country is in various economic, social, political, and sports fields, the better its international prestige will be among different countries. (Interview 9).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winning medal and international prestige</li> <li>• Successful in sport sector in international stage</li> </ul>	Sporting success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ethics and fair play are essential in terms of international prestige. (Interview 4)</li> <li>•Fair play has a long-term effect on the opinions of people around the world compared to winning medals. (Interview 2).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fair play and international prestige</li> <li>• Compete fairly</li> </ul>	Fairness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Winning medal increases the prestige of countries, and the better this position in the global arena, the more it can be used to develop diplomatic relations. (Interview1).</li> <li>•Participating in the Olympics and winning a medal can be very influential in a diplomatic relationship. (Interview 9).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop diplomatic relation with sporting success</li> <li>• Participation and its effect on diplomatic relationship.</li> </ul>	Diplomatic relation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The media is essential and has a great impact on international image. (Interview 10).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of media on international image</li> </ul>	Role of media



<p>•It seems unlikely that the media in the Olympics would want to present a positive image of Iran through Iranian athletes' performance. (Interview 8).</p>		
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### Sporting Success at the Olympic Games and International Prestige

The interviewees emphasized the importance of soft power and its role in sports. In their opinion, a country's prestige is determined by factors such as media power, economic power, and sporting power.

The relations between governments in the international system are not like in previous decades and are not solely based on military power. Currently, the nature of the world's countries' prestige is in some areas such as sports power, media power, and economic power (Interview 2).

The interviewees noted that sporting success leads to international prestige and positive international image of the country among people around the world. 'Winning a medal can bring international prestige for a country, but this prestige is temporary'. (Interview 4). They mentioned that there is a relationship between sporting success and international prestige. 'Winning medals can be more important. It is more important for most participants to win a medal, because it will be both economically justified and very credible in terms of international prestige'. (Interview 7). 'The more successful a country is in various economic, social, political, and sports fields, the better its international prestige will be among different countries'. (Interview 9). Moreover, the interviewees mentioned that for Iran, which officially participated in the Olympic Games from 1948, just taking part is no longer a significant issue. Together they can increase the country's prestige.

Both taking part and winning a medal will improve Iran's international prestige. The purpose of presence means an impressive presence and earning as many Olympic quotas as possible. IOC gives countries that have not been able to qualify for the Olympics a few white cards to have individual athletes represent that country at the Olympic Games. Improving the final ranking, which relies more on winning a gold medal, is essential today. Because at the medal ceremony, the flags of the countries whose athletes are on the podium are raised, and especially the gold medal, in which the anthem of that country is also played, delights politicians and supporters. (Interview 1).

Participants also expressed that international prestige is one of the positive impacts of sporting success in Olympic Games. 'Demonstrating of the country, culture, and society with hosting sports mega-events and having good participants, we can increase our international prestige'. (Interview 3). 'International prestige is a national interest of any country'. (Interview 5). The first emerging theme is shown in Table 4 along with quotations from participants.

**Table 4.** *Sporting Success at the Olympic Games and Interviewees' Quotations*

Theme	Interviewees' quotations
1. sporting success at the Olympic Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ‘Winning a medal can bring international prestige for a country, but this prestige is temporary’. (Interview 4).</li> <li>– ‘Winning medals can be more important. It is more important for most participants to win a medal, because it will be both economically justified and very credible in terms of international prestige’. (Interview 7).</li> <li>– ‘The more successful a country is in various economic, social, political, and sports fields, the better its international prestige will be among different countries’. (Interview 9).</li> <li>– ‘Demonstrating of the country, culture, and society with hosting sports mega-events and having good participants, we can increase our international prestige’. (Interview 3).</li> <li>– ‘International prestige is a national interest of any country’. (Interview 5).</li> </ul>

### **Fairness and International Prestige**

The relevance of fair play in a country’s image was underlined by interviewees. Fair play, as claimed has a long-term impact on people's perceptions of the country. ‘Ethics and fair play are essential in terms of international prestige. While winning a medal can bring international prestige for a country, but this prestige is temporary’. (Interview 4). ‘Fair play has a long-term effect on the opinions of people around the world compared to winning medals’. (Interview 2).

From some of the interviewee’s perspectives, winning medals is their priority at any cost for some nations. ‘Today, sport has gradually become a lucrative industry. Even with doping, such as in Russia, professionalization and investment in the elite sports sectors make the cultural and moral aspects of sports less considered’. (Interview 10).

It is important to pay attention to sports ethics, but since sports, especially at important levels such as the Olympics, have become a major economic industry, of course, winning medals can be more important. It is more important for most participants to win a medal, because it will be both economically justified and very credible in terms of international prestige. (Interview 7).

Besides, some interviewees mentioned that aside from the importance of competing in the Olympic Games with all potentials and having a long-term plan, the athletes’ behavior is crucial, too. ‘We ask athletes to behave fairly with their opponents and respect them and not dispute the referee’s decisions’. (Interviews 6 & 7). The table below shows the fairness theme and quotations from participants.

**Table 5.** *Fairness and Interviewees' Quotations*

Theme	Interviewees' quotations
2. fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 'Ethics and fair play are essential in terms of international prestige. While winning a medal can bring international prestige for a country, but this prestige is temporary'. (Interview 4).</li> <li>– 'Fair play has a long-term effect on the opinions of people around the world compared to winning medals'. (Interview 2).</li> <li>– 'Today, sport has gradually become a lucrative industry. Even with doping, such as in Russia, professionalization and investment in the elite sports sectors make the cultural and moral aspects of sports less considered'. (Interview 10).</li> <li>– 'We ask athletes to behave fairly with their opponents and respect them and not dispute the referee's decisions'. (Interviews 6 &amp; 7).</li> </ul>

## Sport and Diplomatic Relations

With respect to the impact of sporting success, in this context, the Olympic Games success and diplomatic relationship interviewees expressed that 'Participating in the Olympics and winning a medal can be very influential in a diplomatic relationship'. (Interview 9). In addition, another participant stated the relation between sporting success and nation's prestige and their role in the development of diplomatic relations. 'Winning a medal increases the prestige of countries, and the better this position in the global arena, the more it can be used to develop diplomatic relations'. (Interview 1). 'Olympics can be considered an essential factor in de-escalation, development of political relations'. (Interview 2).

International sports may provide opportunities for political leaders to meet and talk about politics and foreign goals. 'Sport can be effective in achieving the political and foreign goals of countries. Sport has an accelerating role but does not act as a direct factor alone'. (Interview 5). Further, the interviewees who were policymaker concerning the importance of the international tournament and its impact on the international image and diplomatic relations stated that

We try to organize some international tournaments in other countries to show our improvement and willingness to interact with other countries. We were invited to go to the United States in 2014 to play four games against the US national team. So, we consider this issue in our policy as we believe it can increase our international image and diplomatic relations. (Interview 4).

In connection with sport and diplomatic relations, some of the interviewees stressed that Iranian players who have the opportunity to play in other countries' leagues can provide public manifestations of togetherness in cultural exchanges and generation among officials from various countries. However, they mentioned a new concern related to athletes' asylum issues in various sports disciplines.

Playing in foreign leagues, using new sports capacities, better interaction with other athletes from other countries, and such cases can be the basis to increase international relations. Of course, the danger of cultural transformation of athletes and their asylum issues in other countries should also be mentioned. Therefore, it seems that this issue has a positive and negative interaction at the same time. However, with the right

policy in the National Olympic Committee, the potential dangers of this issue can be reduced. (Interviews 1 & 2 & 8). Table 6 illustrates the sport and diplomatic relations theme and quotations from participants.

**Table 6.** *Sport and Diplomatic Relations and Interviewees' Quotations*

Theme	Interviewees' quotations
3. sport and diplomatic relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="595 454 1297 510">– ‘Participating in the Olympics and winning a medal can be very influential in a diplomatic relationship’. (Interview 9).</li> <li data-bbox="595 510 1297 611">– ‘Winning a medal increases the prestige of countries, and the better this position in the global arena, the more it can be used to develop diplomatic relations’. (Interview 1).</li> <li data-bbox="595 611 1297 678">– ‘Olympics can be considered an essential factor in de-escalation, development of political relations’. (Interview 2)</li> <li data-bbox="595 678 1297 752">– ‘Sport can be effective in achieving the political and foreign goals of countries. Sport has an accelerating role but does not act as a direct factor alone’. (Interview 5).</li> </ul>

### **Media Coverage and International Prestige**

With regard to the role of media, it is obvious that media power is one of the most effective tools in the international arena today under soft power. The participants stressed the role of the media in the international image of nations. ‘The media is essential and has a great impact on the international image’. (Interview 10). ‘Media coverage has great potential for governments and countries to be recognized internationally, and any country can take advantage of this to its advantage’. (Interview 5).

With the proliferation of media, especially social media, any event in the world that is attractive will be easily available to the world. The link between business, people, and sports is made possible through the media. Today, broadcasting through the media, especially television, has become commercially important. (Interview 1).

Interviewees believed that ‘Various media formats, including visual, print, and online, can affect the international image in general’. (Interview 3). However, in their opinion, ‘the top media power in the world is mainly in the hands of powers such as Britain, Russia, the United States, and some European powers, accordingly, they expressed that media do not show a good image of Iran in the world’. (Interviews 6 & 8). ‘Currently, all media in the world are talking against us’. (Interview 4).

It seems unlikely that the media in the Olympics would want to present a positive image of Iran through Iranian athletes' performance because the Olympic is a pure sports venue. At the same time, the major international media focus more on Iran's security, political, economic and military aspects. (Interview 8).

According to some of the interviewees' opinion, ‘Iran does not have a good international reputation. Iran is considered as a country of terrorist defender and

violence'. (Interviews 4, 8, 10). As shown in the graph below, Iranian sports actors perceive four effects of elite sporting success and international prestige. The following table illustrates the theme of media coverage and quotations from participants.

**Table 7. Media Coverage and Interviewees' Quotations**

Theme	Interviewees' quotations
4. media coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 'The media is essential and has a great impact on the international image'. (Interview 10).</li> <li>– 'Media coverage has great potential for governments and countries to be recognized internationally, and any country can take advantage of this to its advantage'. (Interview 5).</li> <li>– 'Various media formats, including visual, print, and online, can affect the international image in general'. (Interview 3).</li> <li>– 'the top media power in the world is mainly in the hands of powers such as Britain, Russia, the United States, and some European powers, accordingly, they expressed that media do not show a good image of Iran in the world'. (Interviews 6&amp;8).</li> <li>– 'Currently, all media in the world are talking against us'. (Interview 4).</li> <li>– 'Iran does not have a good international reputation. Iran is considered as a country of terrorist defender and violence'. (Interviews 4, 8, 10).</li> </ul>

## Discussion

In order to address the research aim, four themes have emerged by pre-interview information, insight, and the previous studies on the topic including: 1. Sporting success, 2. Fairness, 3. Diplomatic relations, and 4. Media coverage. These themes were considered as important factors in relation to international prestige.

The results of the study are congruent with the existing research literature. For example, align with the first theme of the present study, sporting success at the Olympic Games, prior studies (Breuer and Hallmann 2011, Freeman 2012, Humphreys et al. 2018) have demonstrated the relationship between sporting success and international prestige. The Olympics have often been a stage for countries to gain honour and prestige. This prestige can result from the hosting the event and glorious execution. In accordance with that, Storm and Jakobsen (2020) concluded both hosting sporting mega-events and winning a medal are significant in international prestige. Similarly, Liu (2020) examined how a country's elite sport success would affect its soft power from the perspective of an international audience. Whereas in the present study, we underpinned Iranian sports officials and sport managers' opinion about the topic, they focused on German and Canadian population.

International sporting success, whether by national teams and athletes competing abroad or by the effective staging of a sports mega-event, provides arenas for the deployment of soft power through which states seek to 'attract' others with their values and culture and persuade them to want what they want by projecting a specific 'image' to foreign publics (Grix and Houlihan 2014, p. 576).

However, the findings of the current study regarding the role of sporting success in international prestige do not support the previous research by Haut et al. (2017), they concluded that ‘more success, more prestige’ is an extremely simplified formula. For some countries, success at the Olympics, even by winning a bronze medal, is an opportunity to introduce themselves to the world (Zargar 2015). For Iran, with the current political situation and restriction to access other aspects to present the country’s image for foreign audiences, this aspect might play a more vital role compare with other nations which have access more opportunities on international stages.

Throughout the interviews, participants highlighted the importance of fair play in international prestige. In terms of the second theme, fairness, the results based on our interviewees’ opinions showed both fairness and winning medals can play an important role in the country’s international image. Some studies support our results, including Reiche (2015). His study revealed that sport offers an arena for countries to compete in order to gain international prestige by means other than military and economic power. Therefore, in Iran, since the country is no longer able to compete in economic power, sports is seen as a tool to show the country’s image. Additionally, Murray (2018) and Dubinsky (2019a) mentioned through the political period, big countries, small countries, democratic and non-democratic countries, communities, non-governmental organizations, and private citizens, all see the potential of hosting the Olympic Games to improve their images. From the interviews, it can be concluded that Iranian sports officials and sport managers shared the same beliefs as those in other countries. For example, according to Haut et al. (2016) most Germans perceive Olympic medals important; however, obeying sporting values and fair play rules were valued higher. In other research, in contrast with the importance of fair play rather than just winning the medal, Haut et al. (2020) showed although fairness and Olympic spirit are appreciated internationally, better performance given more importance. Other forms of unfairness such as doping is frequently remembered by the international audience compared with actual performances. This finding aligns with our result, as the interviewees emphasized that sports has evolved into a lucrative industry in recent years. For some countries such as Russia, professionalization and investment in elite sports sectors are more important than moral aspects. In accordance with our findings, Emrich et al. (2014) argued not only athlete's behavior in competition but also the whole system behind the scenes are responsible. By analysing the data, we found interviewees' awareness of their international image through athletic behaviour in international competitions. According to their statement, they expect athletes to treat their opponents properly, show natural respect, and accept the referee's decisions. Interestingly, the participants pointed out that while winning a medal can boost a country's global prestige, it is only transitory. In comparison to winning medals, fair play has a long-term impact on people’s perceptions globally.

Participating in international sporting events, especially the Olympic Games, has always been prestigious for participating countries. Earning Olympic quotas, medals, and championships in these competitions has increased international prestige and greatly impacted the country’s international relations. The third theme was diplomatic relations in the context of international prestige. Interviewees

expressed that both participating in Olympic Games and winning medals can affect diplomatic relations and development of political and diplomatic relations by sporting success. In this line, Rofe and Dichter (2016) and Luša (2017) confirmed an increased interest in considering sports as a potential tool of diplomacy in international relations. Moreover, this finding is consistent with that of Carter and Sugden (2012) and Murray and Pigman (2014). They have found that sport is employed as a diplomatic tool by governments, which enables them to use sports for diplomatic purposes more effectively. A possible explanation for this might be that in the 1990s, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami called for breaking the 'wall of mistrust' between Iran and the United States through sports and other citizen diplomacy forms.

As mentioned in the literature review, scholars have studied the connections between soft power and public diplomacy in the context of sport as a tool for improving a country's image. According to interviewees, the current study confirmed that sports have the potential to help countries achieve their domestic and foreign political goals. This statement can be close to Coakley (2017), which states that international sports provide opportunities for political leaders to meet and talk, but they do not influence the content of their discussions or their policy decision.

Another important finding was the asylum seeker issue. While participants believed organising tournaments abroad and having players who can play in other foreign leagues can demonstrate the progress and desire to collaborate with other nations and help create a positive image worldwide. Others expressed their concerns about the asylum, which is now a significant issue for the Iranian sports officials and sports managers. This finding is in line with (Kenny 2018). Regarding the importance of this issue in their policy, they suggested that with the right policy in the National Olympic Committee, the potential dangers of this issue can be reduced. These findings cannot be extrapolated to all nations.

The study was referring to all sports including the summer Olympic Games. However, the authors expected that the interviewees express the role of women in the Olympic Games and the importance of their success in the international image of Iran. For example, Kimia Alizadeh who was the first Iranian woman to win an Olympic medal.

The last finding in respect to the media coverage theme showed that countries can benefit greatly from media coverage in terms of international prestige. This finding was in congruence with other researcher including (Billings 2008, Chen 2012, Rein and Shields 2007). However, this finding is contrary to Hong and Oh (2020). Interviewees also stressed that the top media power in the world is primarily in the hands of some powerful nations and claimed that in their opinion the media do not show a positive image of Iran. This finding was also reported by Schallhorn and Beck (2017). This result may be explained by the fact that Iran does not have sufficient and proper interaction with the international media in order to show its face well, especially in the Olympic Games. There is a lack of information and knowledge about Iran among foreign public. Media can play crucial role in introducing Iran to global audience.

## Conclusion

The purpose of the interpretivist study was to examine how Iranian sports officials and sport managers perceive the relationship between elite sporting success and international prestige. This study has shown that all interviewees undoubtedly believed that sports is a crucial part of each country's policy. In their opinion, the international diplomatic relations between Iran and other western countries are not as good as before; therefore, sports can play a vital role in the country's relations and its image. Interviewees emphasized that people and governments do not have the favorable image of Iran. According to our results, taking part in international competitions like the Olympic Games, earning more quotas and more qualified athletes and teams can increase Iran's international prestige. While some interviewees believed that not only taking part in the Olympic Games but also winning medals can play a major role in improving the international image of the country. Interestingly, none of the interviewees mentioned the importance of women at the Olympic Games. Currently, Iran does not possess the favorable record regarding women's attendance.

The second major finding was that the success of compatriot athletes and teams, winning a medal, playing fairly with the written rules and the unwritten fair play standards simultaneously enhance Iran's image. The participants claimed that although winning medals is an essential factor in increasing Iran's international prestige, this recognition is temporary. Fairness, showing the country's positive image and proper behavior can altogether affect international prestige more. Thirdly, according to the research results, attending international competitions can improve interaction and enhance diplomatic relations among Iran and other nations. Sports can be considered as an accelerating factor for developing diplomatic relations. In this regard, all interviewees' concerns were the issue of Iranian athletes' asylum in recent years. The participants claimed, recently, athletes seeking asylum were reported in many western media, which can harm Iran's image. Since athletes express the issues that they have been facing in Iran. Athletes seeking asylum abroad is not a new issue; when many people attend an international sporting event, not all of them are expected to return home.

In addition, the findings from this study about media coverage and international prestige suggests that while the media coverage can be considered a tool that leads to an improving international image of nations in the Olympic Games, this advantage needs more effort and attention in Iran. The interviewees' opinion is that the media do not show Iran's positive image at the Olympic Games, which can damage Iran's international image. Moreover, interviewees in charge of making policy believed that sporting success at international competitions increases the prestige of that specific discipline first and then the country's prestige as well. As a result, in their policy, they consider this factor. It was also essential for them to ask athletes to behave fairly with their opponents and respect them and not dispute the referee's decisions.

The results of this study suggest that the concept of international prestige is notably essential when it comes to a country where foreign public may not have a positive attitude toward that country. As a soft power tool, sports can play this role



and build a positive image for that country. This study adds to the growing body of research that contribute to elite sporting success, sports and country image research, international prestige, and public diplomacy in Iran. According to Ghalibaf (2010), one of the missions of sports in Iran is to train the spirit of sportsmanship. Based on this mission for Iranian sports officials and policymakers, fairness and moral aspects have been included in their sports policy. For example, Goudarzi and Honari (2009) found that in wrestling federation, moral and characteristic empowerment and preventing doping and zero tolerance severely against this phenomenon are in their policy. This study result emphasises that apart from sportsmanship other three factors could be in the policy of Federations to improve the positive image of the country. Indeed, policymakers may need to consider the other three factors more than before in their given organisation policy to promote the positive image of Iran.

The limitations of this study include the small number of participants, who are mostly living in Iran and the lack of access to other stakeholders in sports. Further study needs to be carried out to include more samples, like the international population, and examine their opinion about Iran's image. Also, another study would be the examination of how athletes' asylum issues can affect Iran international prestige. Finally, this study helps Iranian sports policymakers to understand that international prestige can be affected with different aspects and provides several implications for stakeholders involved in the sports policy and policymakers to consider the importance of international prestige through Olympic Games.

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## Development of a Taxonomy of Performance for Moroccan Sports Federations

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*In recent years, we have witnessed the establishment of a professionalization process in Morocco. Thus, the multiple problems of the Federations push the managers to raise questions relating to management. However, the interest of Moroccan researchers in management sciences has not been focused on this type of organization. Having said that, performance management is a powerful lever for companies' success. It is based on the establishment of a comprehensive evaluation system via measurement indicators. This makes it possible to evaluate the activity and trigger corrective measures in the event of failure of the strategies laid down, ineffectiveness and non-achievement of goals. Nevertheless, measuring the organizational performance of Sports Federations is complex because of their thorny and paradoxical nature. Based on this observation, we consider it useful to go through an intermediate analysis which will subsequently simplify the establishment of a performance measurement system by these organizations. Thus, we adopt a classification study. The latter allows us a simpler presentation of the profiles of the organizations studied, by bringing together, on the one hand, those seeking to achieve financial, sporting or societal goals. And on the other hand, those who have the necessary resources allow it to achieve these objectives, which guides us to adopt this study of hierarchical classification through the use of Ward's method.*

**Keywords:** *performance, taxonomy of performance, sports federations, sport organizations, Morocco*

### Introduction

In 2008, the ministry adopted a new sports strategy, aimed at orienting Moroccan sport towards a concept of performance which appears polysemous because it refers differently to several translations: economic (growth), financial (profitability), legal (solvency), organizational or even social (Bayle 1999). It is thus clear that performance assessment requires a multi-criteria approach. As far as sports organizations are concerned, the notion of performance is still unclear.

Speaking of sports organizations, we are moving directly towards sports federations. The position of these organizations in the sports sector is strategic, their role is crucial in the sports policies of the States (Winand 2009). Moreover, they intervene in different areas: economy, social, politics, education. These sports

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organizations allow associations to come together through a federal network. This generates a significant negotiating force vis-à-vis the public or economic authorities. They ensure the organization of sporting events, the management of various sporting practices and collaborate with the state in social affairs through the education and socialization of sport (Zintz and Vaillau 2008). According to Bayle (2007), the Federations are characterized by traditional companies such as: the multiplicity of the aims pursued, the mixed financing method (public-private), the presence of a team which brings together volunteers and employees and sometimes civil servants of the state, as well as its adherence to national (Moroccan sports model General Introduction 21) and international (International Federation, International Olympic Committee ...) regulatory systems. As for the Moroccan Sports Federations, they are under the supervision of two powers, internal and external: the first is represented by the supervision of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the second by the International Federation. Indeed, their amateurist management has always been a violation of professionalism.

The conditions for good governance had to be put in place through transparency in management, the adoption of control and accountability mechanisms, respect for ethical rules as well as performance evaluation as well.

That said, performance management is a powerful lever for companies' success. It is based on the establishment of a comprehensive evaluation system via measurement indicators. This makes it possible to monitor the activity and trigger corrective measures in the event of failure of the strategies laid down, ineffectiveness and non-achievement of goals. Nevertheless, measuring the organizational performance of Sports Federations is complex because of their thorny and paradoxical nature.

The complexity of measuring the performance of sports federations, which is both tangible and intangible, leads us towards the adoption of a classification study. The latter allows us a simpler presentation of the profiles of the organizations studied, by bringing together, on the one hand, those seeking to achieve financial, sporting or societal goals. And on the other hand, those who have the necessary resources allow it to achieve these objectives, which guides us to adopt this study of hierarchical classification through the use of Ward's method.

The objective of this article is to present a classification of Moroccan Sports Federations based on dimensions of organizational performance, and also to identify their typology in accordance with their strategic purposes. The aim is to highlight the existence of performance profiles for the 36 Federations included in the study and to distinguish their homogeneous groups through a typological approach. For this purpose, we carried out a quantitative study using a survey addressed to the key officials of each federation.



## **Literature Review**

### *Sports Federations*

Sports organizations are essential in the civic life of a country, they allow individuals to take an active part in their community and contribute to their general well-being, bringing added value. In this perspective, the Federations play a decisive role in the sports policies of nations (Winand 2009), because of their interventions in the various fields: economy, society, politics, education, etc. They represent the cornerstone of the sports movement, which is organized on a pyramid model both in Morocco and internationally. Their mission is to organize, develop and promote the practice of sport in one or more disciplines: the organization of competitions at different levels (local, regional, national), elite training, participation in competitions international research, sports results research, licensing, training of volunteer educators, referees, medical monitoring of athletes (Zintz and Vaillau 2008).

Added to this are their responsibilities relating to the regulation of sporting activity. Bayle (1999) thus summarized their functions in the following points:

- Sport governance.
- Establishment and management of sports programs.
- Preparation of national teams.
- Implementation of actions to promote sports activity.
- Organization of competitions at national level.
- Preparation of the elite for participation in international competitions.

As we can notice, sports federations are characterized by the multiplicity of objectives, but even more, a diversity of human resources who manage and work within these establishments, speaking of volunteers and employees, mixed funding (private and public ... ). These peculiarities create a certain ambiguity at the managerial level, and therefore the pursuit of performance becomes more complex.

### *Performance of Sports Federations*

There does not seem to be a universal definition of “performance”. Indeed, this notion remains relative depending on the context and field in which it operates. Thus, it can correspond to efficiency, productivity, return on invested capital, input/output ratio.

Being efficient is the *raison d'être* of any organization, whatever its nature and activity. However, defining this notion has always been complex and has given rise to several debates for years, as Bayle, (2007) points out: “The performance must be specified each time you want to use it. Indeed, this vague concept occupies a central place in any organization. It intrigues several questions and generates various definitions. It is generally designed with regard to effectiveness,

efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and relevance. The notion of performance is indeed a construct, an abstract notion conveyed by the theorists of organizations.

Indeed, organizational performance has been treated with care by both profit and non-profit organizations. Nevertheless, its study is complex and there is still a “lack of conceptual coherence”. Indeed, three reasons could explain this ambiguity: At first glance, different schools of thought examined organizational performance (Walton and Dawson 2001). The preferences and criteria for understanding and measuring each of them lead them to understand this notion from their own point of view. Then, this concept has been studied in many types of organizations. In this sense, performance can have different meanings depending on how success is perceived and defined. Since the mission and objectives of the organization are obviously different depending on the context and the typologies of the structures, multiple definitions apply. Finally, we are faced with the question of strategic constituents (Herman and Renz 2008). In other words, each stakeholder in an organization may have an individual perspective on how performance should be assessed and addressed, which may differ from that of the organization itself. These three reasons obviously prevent the possibility of a unified approach and a single definition of organizational performance. As a result, we see diversity in research on organizational performance according to different approaches and expectations of individuals.

Cameron (1986) emphasizes the subjective and multidimensional nature of organizational performance. According to these authors, studying this notion in terms of financial or business results provides only a reduced view of the organization. Thus, it is imperative to broaden the analysis by taking subjective and objective criteria. Love and Skitmore (1996), report that the subjective assessment of the effectiveness of an organization is found to be an excellent indicator of the subsequent survival and growth of the organization.

Therefore, Winand et al. (2015) clarified that the study of organizational performance is complex in many respects. First, it is examined by different approaches, each with its own perception of understanding and method of measurement. Then, it must be studied depending on the type of organization, and therefore perceived according to the nature and objectives of the structure in question. Finally, each stakeholder (internal and external) perceives organizational performance from its own vision (Walton and Dawson 2001).

#### *Purposes of Moroccan Sports Federations*

The goals of sports organizations are much more difficult to determine because they are not fixed a priori, which explains the difficulty in defining the managerial coherence that should result from it. One can thus defend the idea that performance can be a function of the capacity of the organization to meet the needs of society and to achieve sporting results. The notion of paradox management is present at the operating level of the federal system. This characteristic further complicates the measurement of performance. Indeed, sports organizations produce goods and services that they make available to the environment and it is important, as for private companies and with similar methods, to know and assess

to what extent these goods and these services are accessible, used and appropriate to the needs detected and what are their production costs (Bayle 1999).

For sports federations, some will want to see in them a system capable of 'producing' champions, for others it will be a system capable of disseminating the sporting phenomenon to as many people as possible, which refers to the achievement of athletic performance. Along the same lines, Babiak (2007) asserts that the advent of the "reign of public opinion" calls for several consequences for the management of organizations. The rationality advocated by scientific management, where only technical measures prevail, is followed by systemic management which strives to take into account a stronger interaction between the organization and its environment.

The particularity of sports federations, relating to the multiplicity of aims pursued, directs each researcher wishing to study performance to adopt a multidimensional approach. In this vision, we will find below an overview of the different aims pursued by Moroccan sports federations, then the determinants allowing the achievement of these objectives (Jibraili 2020).

### Objectives Pursued by the Moroccan Sports Federations

The sporting objective: Among the strategic goals of the sporting federations, the achievement of the sporting goal is undoubtedly the most striking. Qualified as "sports performance", Bayle (1999) considers it to be vocational insofar as it corresponds to the areas of expertise of the Federations. The speeches of the respondents are oriented towards the qualified objectives of "Sports production", "Winning medals or competitions", "Production of champions" "Popularization of sports practice and the increase in the number of members".

Chelladurai and Haggerty (1991), Papadimitriou (2000), Wolfe et al. (2002), Balduck (2009), Koski (1995) and Winand (2009) concluded in their work that the Federations usually pursue two distinct and not very contradictory sporting objectives: these are the missions relating to "national (mass) sport" and "sport of high level (elite sport)". This orientation is reflected at the Moroccan level by the development of the elite, whereas was indicated by the respondents: "the achievement of high-level sporting success". In addition, the Moroccan Federations also have the responsibility of ensuring sports promotion, which is equivalent to the development of sport for all (Madella et al. 2005, Bayle 1999).

National sports federations have become supreme players in the country's societal development. With the changes experienced by this sector during this period, and since 2008, these organizations have become partners of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the State in societal missions relating to: education, health, ethics and respect the environment. The analysis of the statutes of the Federations, the objective contracts and the speeches of the respondents made it possible to conclude that in parallel with the sporting vocation, the Federation also pursues a societal interest of an ideological nature, qualified as "societal performance". The latter is an almost primary purpose for Federations and may represent the central objective for others. Thus, the answers provided by the experts were all oriented around the same ideological and humanist connotation of the axiological message delivered.

Several authors have mentioned the importance of the societal dimension within sports federations, for Victor (2017), societal performance corresponds to the Federation's contribution to maintaining the health of population through the practice of mass sport. According to Winand (2009), it corresponds to the implementation of activities to support and promote the values of the organization.

#### Determinants of Organizational Performance

Size represents a main factor in achieving the performance of Moroccan sports federations. It corresponds to the number of salaried employees, volunteers and finally licensees affiliated to these organizations. For both authors and respondents, this determinant is of crucial importance in every attempt to measure the purposes of the Federations. This dimension has a great impact on the success of their sports programs, on promotion, and on societal performance. Indeed, the critical size required to achieve strategic objectives was also raised by respondents. Some federations with limited financial resources and small sizes are not in a position to honour all of their commitments. Smith (1996) also asserted that the size of the organization is a key factor in performance. By citing the research of Papadimitriou (2002) and Slack (1985), these authors stated that this factor explains the level of professionalism and the mode of governance of these organizations.

The financial objective within the Federations relates to the search for as much financial resources as possible. The majority of Moroccan sports federations are totally dependent on the subsidies granted by the Minister of Sport in Morocco-Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports (MJS). This State funding, which represents more than 70% of their budget, is allocated to them annually according to the ratings assigned to them following the system of evaluation of objectives.

People are the heart of any business, whatever its activity. It is therefore crucial to create a favourable internal climate. Indeed, the organizational climate for a Federation is no different from that of other organizations operating in other sectors, insofar as it concerns a permanent and stable staff. It has been highlighted as a key determinant in the performance model of sports organizations. Bayle (1999) underlined the need of the Sports Federation to maintain a good social climate by improving the quality of working conditions, collaboration, even personal development between the voluntary actors, employees and technical managers, at the head office level. Federal. This author presented four areas of reference: working conditions, training, organization and coordination of tasks. Likewise, Koski (1995) underlined that the dimension of the "organizational climate" corresponds to the capacity of the sports federation to motivate its technical and administrative team.

The aspect of financial management is one of the determining factors that were highlighted by the experts consulted. As pointed out by Wolfe et al. (2002), Balduck (2009), Papadimitriou (2002) and Winand et al. (2010). Sound financial management goes hand in hand with a high level of performance. The faculty of the Moroccan Sports Federation to control its financial balance is judged by the respondents as peremptory. Indeed, the strong financial dependence of the

Federations on grants granted by the MJS prevents their financial stability and causes the absence of autonomy of these organizations.

The management of sports programs is at the level of high-performance sport and sport for all (Chelladurai et al. 1987, Wolfe et al. 2002, Balduck 2009). On the one hand, high performance sports programs bring together all the services for high performance athletes. On the other hand, Sport for All programs are actions, in sufficient quantity and quality, intended for all member members. Thus, the respondents demanded that a Federation, which wishes to achieve sporting goals, will have to set up a promotional and high-level sports program.

Respondents stressed in their statements that it is essential for a Federation to maintain relations with its institutional environment. From the same point of view, Bayle (1999), Papadimitriou (2002), Wolfe et al. (2002), Balduck (2009) and Winand et al. (2010) indicated that external communication is a key factor in the performance of these organizations. On the road to achieving strategic objectives, National Sport Federation (NSF) are required to promote and develop their discipline through their media coverage. Bayle (1999) noted that the external communication of a NSF was reflected in its ability to publicize the image of its discipline and its activities in a positive manner. The sports organization must develop a communication system with its institutional partners: sponsors, media, Ministry of Youth and Sports and other sports bodies in order to control its external environment. This communication is viewed from the perspective of notoriety.

## **Research Methodology**

The objective is to propose a classification of Moroccan Sports Federations based on the eleven dimensions of organizational performance. We are also interested in identifying their typology in accordance with their strategic purposes. The aim is to highlight the existence of performance profiles for the 36 Federations included in the study and to distinguish their homogeneous groups through a typological approach. To this end, the method of ascending hierarchical classification is undeniably important. To do this, we established a score for each dimension based on the average of the indicators selected. Subsequently, we calculated the score of the Federations on the basis of the eleven dimensions. The choice is made on the use of a hierarchical parametric classification, more precisely the Ward method for two reasons:

- We have data that have interval properties (5-point scale).
- We have a sample of 86 individuals.

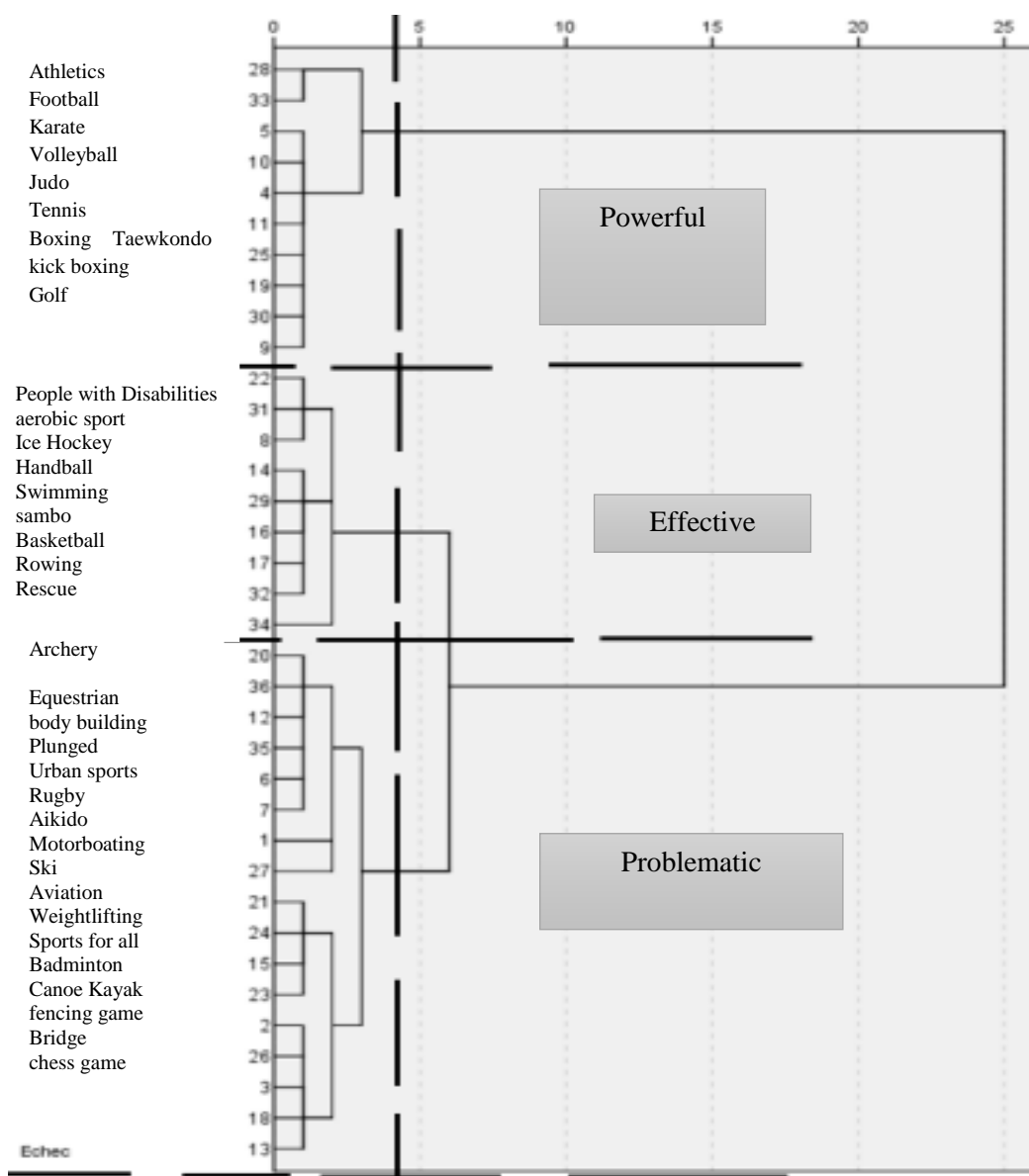
Before starting the analysis, it is first necessary to recall Ward's hierarchical classification method adopted.

This is because hierarchical classification methods place items on the basis of similarities between clusters. The latter progress through a series of steps that builds a tree structure, adding clusters or eliminating them from clusters. As a

result, we distinguish between two types of hierarchical groupings: division and agglomeration. The choice fell on the second, which is the Ward method (Hair et al. 1992). Ward's minimum variance method was originally presented by Ward (1963). She defines a class as a group of entities in which the variance between members is relatively small (Blashfield 1976). The classes are gradually formed according to the principle of minimization of variance (Morey and Blashfield 1983). According to Vachon et al. (2005), Ward's method has demonstrated very powerful results, compared to solutions obtained by other techniques (Morey and Blashfield 1983). It is widely used in most management science studies. In this case, we chose to combine this method and the Euclidean distance, because they have shown good performance when used by the authors in different studies (Beaulieu-Prévost 2002). For the analysis, we used IBM SPSS Statistics 2.0 software.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results of this clustering are provided by a dendrogram which successively groups the Federations according to their proximities in accordance with the Ward distance. Three groups were highlighted through the results of clustering. The diagram shown in Figure 1 has been formatted in a specific way to make the different classes clearly visible.

**Figure 1.** Hierarchical Dendrogram Analysis (Ward Method)**Table 1.** Presentation of Clusters

<b>High level sporting success</b>	2.47	4.45	2.55
<b>Promotion</b>	2.81	4.37	3.30
<b>Societal performance</b>	2.77	3.85	3.52
<b>Acquisition of financial resources</b>	1.65	2.48	1.48
<b>Size</b>	2.53	3.73	3.07
<b>Promotion program</b>	2.40	4.03	3.42
<b>Elite sport program</b>	1.59	3.42	1.88
<b>Financial resources management</b>	1.87	3.80	2.22
<b>Organizational climate</b>	2.04	3.74	2.58
<b>Organizational functioning</b>	3.47	4.40	4.52
<b>External communication</b>	2.43	4.20	3.30

By drawing inspiration from the classification method used by Bayle (1999) and by referring to the table above, the analysis of the results from the scores and the means of each variable forced to adopt three qualifiers to name the classes: “the powerful”, “the efficient” and “the problematic”.

- **Powerful:** High scores on the eleven dimensions of organizational performance.
- **Effective:** Average scores on seven dimensions of organizational performance and relatively low on three others.
- **Problematic:** Low scores on most dimensions of organizational performance. The membership of each Federation: to the first, second or third cluster is indicated in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Clusters of Federations

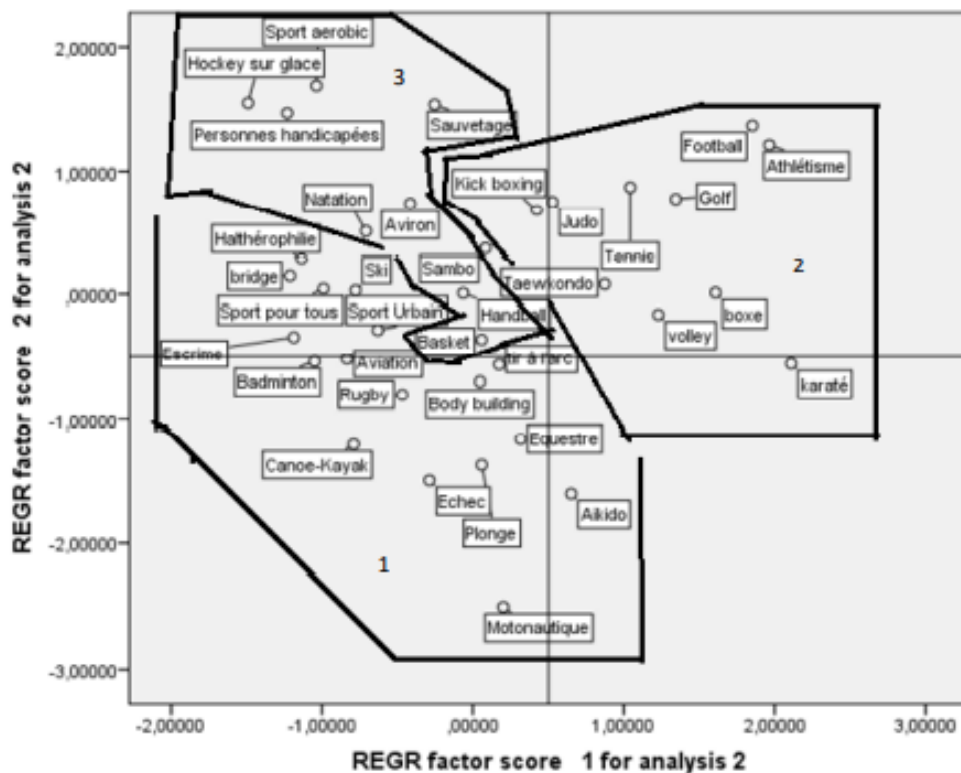
Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Aïkido	Judo	Hockey sur glace
Badminton	Boxe	Handball
Escrime	Golf	Sambo
Sport Urbain	Karaté	Basket
Rugby	Tennis	Personnes handicapées
Body building	Taekwondo	Natation
Echec	Volley-ball	Sports aérobics
Haltérophilie	Athlétisme	Aviron
Bridge	Kick boxing	Sauvetage
Tir à l'arc	Football	
Ski		
Sport pour tous		
Aviation		
Canoë-Kayak		
Motonautique		
Plongée		
Equestre		



In addition to the dendrogram, we find it useful to represent the three groups of sports federations by a principal component analysis (PCA), in order to expose the three classes on a two-dimensional graph. This will highlight the Ward distances that separate the Federations (see Figure 2).

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is one of the multidimensional descriptive methods called “factorials”. It can transform many starting indicators into synthetic indicators called principal components or factors. This analysis produces axes (factors) which are linear combinations of the initial variables, hierarchical and independent of each other. It is a powerful tool for compressing and synthesizing information. It corresponds to a projection method which makes it possible to present observations from the  $p$ -dimensional space of the  $p$  variables to a  $k$ -dimensional space ( $k < p$ ). The vertical dimension of this PCA, which represents component 1, is marked by “good organizational functioning and good societal performance”. On the other hand, the horizontal dimension, which forms component 2, is characterized by “sufficiency of financial resources and sports performance”. Thus, the more a Federation is located at the top and to the right of the graph, the more it obtains high achievement scores on these dimensions. These organizations are considered to be the most efficient on the sporting and societal levels.

**Figure 2.** Presentation of Clusters by PCA



As for the Federations positioned at the top and to the left of the graph, they achieve good societal performance and have good organizational functioning, but

obtain low scores on the sporting side and have financial difficulties. In addition, the Federations positioned at the bottom and to the left of the graph tend to obtain a low performance score for “societal and sporting” purposes, have financial difficulties and have unsatisfactory internal functioning. On the other hand, those located at the bottom and to the right of the graph tend to obtain high scores on the sporting level, have sufficient financial resources but are weak on the organizational and societal functioning sides.

## Conclusion

The analyses carried out on the federations studied allowed us to retain three performance profiles the powerful, the efficient and the problematic. Thus, we present below the summary of the survey carried out.

### *Class 2: The Mighty*

The Mighty is composed by ten Federations: “Football, Athletics, Golf, Kickboxing, Taekwondo, Judo, Tennis, Volleyball, Boxing and Karate” form the powerful class with high scores on the eleven dimensions of organizational performance. These are the Federations with significant financial means, and a priori of a very good size. Very high organization and sporting performance, notably with good societal performance. They present a culminating overall level of performance. Indeed, these Federations have sufficient financial resources and size, a satisfactory level of organizational functioning and very good external communication. The organizational climate and the management of financial resources are efficient, which explains the good organization of the Federations which represent this group. It should therefore be noted that these organizations have good “promotion and high performance” programs. They result in very high scores for “top athletic success and promotion”. Which testifies to a good athletic performance. The organizations embodying these sports disciplines are also endowed with good societal performance. In the final analysis, Football, Golf and Athletics are the most efficient insofar as they register high scores on the two purposes: sporting and societal. They have titanic financial means and obey a very good organizational functioning. As for Boxing and Judo, they have good financial resources and are characterized by a good sporting level, while Taekwondo and Kickboxing are oriented much more towards societal performance.

### *Class 3: The Efficient*

Nine Federations make up this group: Basketball, Handball, Sambo, Rowing, Swimming, Rescue, Sport for Handicapped People, Ice Hockey and aerobic sport. These Olympic and non-Olympic Federations are unsatisfactory on three variables and average or even good on the rest. These are effective Federations, particularly in terms of organizational functioning and societal performance. These organizations of smaller size than those learning the cluster of the powerful, obtain

relatively average scores, with a weakness on all dimensions compared to the class of the powerful. The lowest scores are recorded on the following three variables: “acquisition of financial resources”, “management of financial resources” and “high performance sport program”. Despite the difficulties related to financial means, this group is characterized by a good size, good external communication and manages to set up a solid promotion program. And scores higher than powerful on the dimension of “organizational functioning”. The Federations in this group reach a satisfactory societal level that is relatively similar to that obtained by the second group. However, they are weak on the sporting side. Following this, the disciplines of: Sport Aerobics, Ice Hockey, Rescue and Sport for People with Disabilities record the best scores on societal performance and internal functioning, which goes hand in hand with the nature of their discipline. This group is qualified as “Efficient” because the Federations seem to be making good use of their pool of practitioners and their good sizes. Despite the limited financial resources, they manage to have a very good organizational functioning and to achieve societal performance in an excellent way.

### *Class 1: The Problematic*

This class is made up of eighteen Federations: Motor-boating, Aikido, Diving, Chess, Equestrian, Body Building, Archery, Aviation, Rugby, Canoeing, Badminton, Aviation, Fencing, Urban sport, Sport for all, Skiing, Bridge, and Weightlifting. These sports federations are living in difficulty: They have a low or even average score on the eleven dimensions of organizational performance. Their size is medium and their financial situation is precarious. Indeed, these Federations come up against problems in setting up their annual high level sport programs. The management of financial resources is unsatisfactory and the level of communication with the external environment is low. On the other hand, this group is relatively satisfactory in terms of organizational functioning. Some Federations, such as “Weightlifting and Skiing” and to a lesser extent “Sport for All, Urban Sport, Fencing and Bridge” manage to score an average score on societal performance and on organizational functioning. By ruling out “Aikido”, all the Federations in this group have financial problems and encounter difficulties in achieving sporting goals. This cluster has major weaknesses, in particular through the inability of the organizations that represent it to achieve good sporting and societal performance.

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