

# Football and Nation Branding: Exploring Saudi Arabia's Digital Strategy for its Global Country's Recognition

*El fútbol y la marca-país: Explorando la estrategia digital de Arabia Saudí para su reconocimiento global*

Krishna Satish  
Universitat de Vic  
Universitat Central de Catalunya

Xavier Ginesta  
Universitat de Vic  
Universitat Central de Catalunya

Jordi de San Eugenio Vela  
Universitat de Vic  
Universitat Central de Catalunya

## Referencia de este artículo

Satish, Krishna; Ginesta, Xavier y De San Eugenio Vela, Jordi (2024). Football and Nation Branding: Exploring Saudi Arabia's Digital Strategy for its Global Country's Recognition. *adComunica. Revista Científica de Estrategias, Tendencias e Innovación en Comunicación*, n.º 27. Castellón de la Plana: Departamento de Ciencias de la Comunicación de la Universitat Jaume I, 27-52. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/adcomunica.7776>.

## Keywords

Nation branding; Football; Saudi Arabia; Tourism; Culture; Soft Power.

## Palabras clave

branding de naciones; fútbol; Arabia Saudí; turismo; cultura; soft power.

## Abstract

Nation branding is an important factor of international reputation management which has gained increasing importance for nations worldwide. Since 2018, Saudi Arabia has embarked on a journey to enhance its global recognition and reputation by strategically investing in football. This exploratory and descriptive research article examines the efforts and challenges Saudi Arabia faces in investing in football as an important tool for country branding. The research will adopt a quantitative approach through the content analysis of X (Twitter) to explore the impact of football on Saudi Arabia's nation branding initiatives. The analysis focuses on the content of the tweets, as well as on how they report about this content (i.e., positive, negative and neutral). The findings of this research shows that Saudi Arabia has a government-centric approach to nation branding through football and focuses on finding out the complex nature of utilizing football to promote the country's pursuit of global recognition and reputation enhancement through the investment in talent, foreign commercial deals and hosting mega-sport events.

## Resumen

La gestión de la marca-país cobra cada vez más importancia para la reputación internacional de los países. Desde 2018, Arabia Saudí se ha embarcado en un viaje para mejorar su reconocimiento y reputación global invirtiendo estratégicamente en el fútbol. Este artículo de investigación, exploratorio y descriptivo, examina los esfuerzos y desafíos que Arabia Saudita enfrenta al invertir en el fútbol como una herramienta importante para la gestión de su marca-país. La investigación adopta un enfoque cuantitativo a través del análisis de contenido de X (Twitter) para explorar el impacto del fútbol en las iniciativas de marca-país de Arabia Saudí. El análisis se centra en el contenido de los twits, así como en la forma de informar sobre este contenido (es decir, positivo, negativo y neutro). Los resultados de esta investigación muestran que Arabia Saudí gestiona su marca-país de una manera centralizada, liderada por su gobierno, usando el fútbol como activo prioritario. El artículo se centra en averiguar la compleja naturaleza de la utilización del fútbol para promover la búsqueda del reconocimiento mundial de Arabia Saudí y la mejora de la reputación de este país a través de la inversión en talento, acuerdos comerciales con actores extranjero y la organización de megaeventos deportivos.

## Authors

Krishna Satish [Krishna.satish@uvic.cat] is a PhD student at the Universitat de Vic-Universitat Central de Catalunya. He holds a Master's degree in Statistics and Economics.

Xavier Ginesta [Xavier.ginesta@uvic.cat] is Lecturer in the Department of Communication at the Faculty of Business and Communication of the Universitat de Vic-Universitat Central de Catalunya. He is a member of the research group Audiovisual Translation, Communication and Territory (TRACTE).

Jordi de San Eugenio Vela [Jordi.saneugenio@uvic.cat] is Full Professor of the Department of Communication at the Faculty of Business and Communication of the Universitat de Vic-Universitat Central de Catalunya. He is a member of the research group Audiovisual Translation, Communication and Territory (TRACTE).

## 1. Introduction

Nation branding is about making a country stand out and making people see it in a special way. It's like giving a country its own unique style and making it important to the people who live there and those from other places (Dinnie, 2007). This is a phenomenon which, is becoming more common in the modern world as countries are competing on a bigger stage to be the major face of the modern world. They want to attract tourists, get businesses to invest in them, and sell more things to other countries.

These are the main goals of nation branding. But there are even more good things that can happen when a country does this. It can help keep the country's money stable, make people trust the country more, and make investors feel confident about it. It can also make the country's reputation better, give it more say in world politics, build stronger partnerships with other countries, and make its people prouder and more confident. Football being the epitome of global sport is now a forerunner of Nation branding in the modern world (Ginesta, 2017; Fuller, 2017).

Nation branding through football in Asian countries started with South Korea in 2002 co-hosting the FIFA World Cup. In the lead-up to the 2002 FIFA World Cup, South Korea embarked on an ambitious journey to boost its international recognition and promote its brand-name products to the world. The South Korean government took a strategic approach to leverage the global attention brought by the World Cup to improve its national economy and branding (Anholt, 2003). The government decided to implement five strategies- internationalization of Korean brand names, strengthening corporate brand management, reinforcing electronic brand management marketing, expanding the infrastructure of brand management, and most importantly raising the country's image abroad. To achieve these strategies, a significant step was the creation of a 100 billion won venture fund to help exporters improve the designs of their products. Moreover, industrial design renovation centers were established in ten cities across the nation. These centers aimed to assist small- and medium-sized companies in improving the design of their products, forming part of a comprehensive effort to boost the value and recognition of Korean brands. South Korea's long-term vision also included the establishment of a Brand Academy where approximately 500 specialists would be trained every year in brand management, character design, and industrial packaging. This internal educational initiative demonstrated a unique and forward-thinking approach to nation branding.

Similarly, Qatar emphasized Nation branding through football by hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Qatar is a Rentier state country that uses income from the commercialization of its gas to create an economy, which can be successful in the future without depending on this natural source. Sport, above all football, has

been a key sector in which the Qatari government believes to promote the image of its country worldwide (Ginesta and San Eugenio, 2014).

Following the Nation branding models of their Asian counterparts South Korea and Qatar, Saudi Arabia has decided to embark on a nation branding strategy through investing in sports, especially in football (the country has been recently awarded by the FIFA World Cup 2034), and to show the world they are the forerunners of the global football landscape as part of Saudi Vision 2030. Saudi Vision 2030 is designed to achieve three main objectives: make Saudi Arabia a vibrant society where people can enjoy a high quality of life, make Saudi Arabia a thriving economy with diverse industries and businesses where football and tourism as the frontrunners, and finally make Saudi Arabia the front runner as the leading political power in the modern world through nation branding.

The objectives of this research are double: a) to analyze the role of football in Saudi Arabia's nation branding strategy and its impact for the global sports recognition and reputation of the country; b) to analyze the challenges and opportunities of this process, shedding light on how the main organizations of the sport industry of the country are managing its digital image and reputation in an ever-evolving global football landscape. In the next part of the paper, a review of the literature regarding the topics will be undertaken. The proposed methodology is presented in the third section, while the results are presented in the fourth section. The paper ends with the discussion and conclusion of the results.

## 2. Review of literature

### 2.1. Place branding as an interdisciplinary research field in social sciences

Place branding can be defined as «a network of associations» in the consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design (Zenker and Braun, 2010). In parallel, city branding shifts the emphasis from rational and practical aspects to the development of mental, emotional, and psychological connections with the city (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008; Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). In fact, place branding through sport is one of the components of the overall place branding strategy of a territory (Pousadas and Urdampilleta, 2012; Llopis-Goig, 2016; Webb and Richelieu, 2016; Richelieu, 2018). Consequently, a place branding strategy through sport should be translated into a socio-economic legacy, with private and public benefits for the community.

In the vast global space, each location craved its own identity. These identities propelled their social and economic advancement; they were more than just em-

blems. Strategies for forming these identities have been thoroughly investigated and implemented in many marketplaces over the years. However, a less-travelled path drew near to a certain set of places: the developing, the transitional, the unfavourable perception, of the recently industrialized countries (Rein and Shields, 2007). These places set out on a mission to find out their real nature. They were interested in portraying a unique image that would make them stand out and, in turn, offer opportunities for new possibilities in society and business. These locations entered the world of sports, an area that was mainly unfamiliar to them in their quest for this distinct identity. They turned to sports to help them find their identity.

Through their newfound journey, they were able to test three different avenues in the field of sports branding: the venue, the team, and the event (Rein and Shields, 2007; Brannagan, Reiche and Bedwell, 2023). Some locations focused on just one of the three at a time, while others, limited by resources, embraced all three at once like Qatar did since 1995 (Ginesta and San Eugenio, 2014). Their stories revolved around the decision to take one of these routes (Rein and Shields, 2007). These locations had to balance their sports branding activities with other urgent demands in an environment where there was intense rivalry for resources and attention, especially in the current digital world (Zomeño-Jiménez and Pallarés-Renau, 2020). Resources and attention were needed for several challenges, including healthcare, education, and the environment. They lived in a world that was always changing. Their branding strategies needed to be flexible and agile due to the rapid improvements in technology, digital communication, and changes in the resources that were available (Briciu, Rezeanu and Briciu, 2020).

Similarly, in a globalized world where nations try to differentiate themselves, there was an effort to identify the unique place branding strategies used by each. This expedition concentrated on areas recognized for their vigorous involvement in this field. Three unique clusters emerged as a tapestry as the investigation threads were stitched together (Richelieu, Li and Leng Ho, 2021). The first one was Sport diplomacy which was being used by certain countries to shape their identities. They saw the potential of sports to create a gentle effect on the world scene. Secondly, others found balance in their search for uniqueness. They struck a balance between the legacy their sports endeavours created and the commercial aspects. A third cluster of nations had opted to concentrate on the financial benefits of their sports endeavours. To them, sports was about more than just being competitive but also about obtaining real advantages. China's emergence was an important chapter in this complex web of strategy. It was evidence of the shifting nature of the international scene, where flexibility and foresight were essential in developing an effective place branding plan using sports (Ginesta, 2022) In this story, notable nations including Australia, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan

all made an appearance. Each had a distinct story to share, illustrating the variety of approaches that could be used to pursue place branding via sports.

When it comes to defining a place's identity, the combination of sport and tourism presents a powerful story, illuminating the critical roles that tourism and sport can play in the complex process of place branding. The body of work in the field of place branding provides the backdrop for the drama that is playing out as the curtains rise (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, Adrian and Basińska-Zych, Agata, 2011). The focus then turns to the core of the issue, which is developing a brand image that is appealing on a local, regional, and national level. However, the stakeholders also take centre stage in this story, making them key players in addition to the strategists. Sport and tourism could be used as an effective weapon in the toolbox for promoting local, regional, and national brands amid the on-stage discussion (Manas, 2018; Roberts et al. 2016). These two components work together to dynamically shape a place's identity. It explores in greater detail the nuanced connection between a location's brand and the perceptions it evokes. The stages of tourism brand management are among the many aspects of the story that have been thoroughly examined, giving the story more depth and complexity. Case studies and strategic documents demonstrate the urgent need for place branding. This goes beyond just talking points; it calls for all-encompassing marketing strategies that capitalize on the opportunities of travel and sports.

## 2.2. Football as an asset for place branding strategies

More than borders, languages, or cultures, football is a symbol of passion and unification (Fernández and Villar, 2022). It is a force for good in the economy, a force for social change, and a sign of impending peace. Imagine now the magnificent spectacle that is football, with its all-star teams and hordes of passionate fans. These professional football teams are essential to the health of cities and regions, not just as sporting institutions. They give these places a distinct personality, influencing their social structure, economy, and character. Surprisingly, though, not many people know about the connection between professional football teams and city branding (Ginesta, 2017 and 2022). While major athletic events such as the Olympics and the World Cup have enjoyed the spotlight that comes with city branding, football clubs have only rarely and quietly started down similar paths (Pan, 2019).

The goal of this narrative is to delve into that unexplored area and discover the connections between professional football and the skill of city branding. The words that come out of academic discourse and research pages paint a clear picture. They demonstrate how professional football teams affect a city's very brand

because of their ability to bring people together and stoke passion. They have an impact on not only the spectators in the stands but also visitors looking for the excitement of game days, investors considering the possibility of expansion, and locals who are proud of their team as a representation of their community (Manas, 2018; Caizza and Audretsch, 2015). Ultimately, this tale highlights an important fact that is sometimes disregarded professional football has a significant influence on the image and brand of the cities or regions where it is played. As the history of football develops, so does its influence on local narratives, instilling a sense of pride and cohesion in cities or regions that only the beautiful game can (Fernández and Villar, 2022).

Sport, above all football, has been a key sector in which the Qatari government believes in promoting the image of its country worldwide (Ginesta and San Eugenio, 2014; Brannagan, Reiche and Bedwell, 2023). Under the guidance of a visionary Emir, the Qatari government devised a plan that was concentrated on sports, a powerful tool. They started a rebranding campaign to change how the world saw Qatar. See, sports were going to become synonymous with Qatar. But it wasn't just any sport; it was football, the most popular game in the world. The Qatari government was determined to use football as a vehicle for its transformation, and it made calculated moves and formed alliances. As the narrative progresses, it becomes clear that opinions regarding the recently formed alliance between Qatar and football are divided. There were conflicting opinions regarding the advantages of the deal between the storied FC Barcelona and Qatar Sports Investments (QSI) in distant Spain. It was a sign that the path to rebranding was not without challenges.

Aiming to establish itself as a center for sports and tourism, Qatar set out on an ambitious journey to prepare for this historic occasion (Theodoropoulou and Alos, 2018). They wanted to be known around the globe as a special place that offered excellent sports at very competitive prices. Through the power of sports, they sought to bring the world to their doorstep. Qatar used the power of digital media to accomplish this. To reach a worldwide audience, they released a plethora of promotional materials in both Arabic and English. These were not your typical advertisements; rather, they were expertly designed with an emphasis on image creation, utilizing the techniques of social semiotics and multimodal discourse analysis. Qatar created its unique image by carefully combining a variety of symbols and visual components. The country showcased a fusion of tradition and modernity in an attempt to appeal to a worldwide audience. They portrayed themselves as an idealistic society where modernity and tradition coexisted peacefully. It was a creative and political masterpiece that aimed to win over people's hearts and minds everywhere. Qatar was rapidly becoming an attraction for sports tourists as the preparations went on. The world eagerly awaited the revelation of this once-hidden gem—a place of unparalleled sporting experiences, opportunity, and unity (Theodoropoulou, and Alos, 2018).



The 2022 FIFA World Cup held in Qatar, was a massive event that undoubtedly changed the landscape. The Pentagon Legacy Model (PLM), a customized strategic management model, emerges as the compass to traverse the complexities of this undertaking. This model, which was created by combining two highly regarded industry practices—Ricelieu’s Diamond models and Hanna and Rowley’s SPBM models—gains a special dimension when the sports place branding strategy is incorporated. The plot unfolds as we explore the reasoning behind this all-encompassing strategy (Fernandez & Villar, 2022). States like Qatar which are rapidly industrializing, emerging nations, and transitioning nations with tarnished reputations stand to gain the most from this broad approach. For regions looking to reinvent their identities on the international scene, it is a ray of hope.

Qatar being a Rentier state country uses income from the commercialization of its gas to create an economy, that can be successful in the future without depending on this natural source. Just more than fifty years ago, the theory dubbed Rentier State Theory (RST) was created primarily to explain why some developing states chose to continue with their authoritarian systems of governance instead of changing to democratic ones. But since then, the political and economic characteristics of some states, which it was designed to explain, have undergone significant changes. Over the past 50 years, RST has undergone significant modification to consider resource-rich countries’ developing behaviours into account (Scott Walker, 2023).

Two countries in the Middle East, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), started a nation-branding journey to deal with the challenges of the contemporary global economy (Rein and Shields, 2007; Zeineddine, 2017). The goal of the United Arab Emirates was to establish Dubai as the country’s premier brand and a representation of wealth, creativity, and an advanced economy (Zeineddine, 2017). Abu Dhabi also plays a part in supporting this ambitious goal, helping the UAE to become the most valuable brand in the Middle East. Qatar, meanwhile, has a story to tell about its branding. Endowed with abundant hydrocarbon reserves, it too aspires to escape the confines of a rentier economy. Qatar has developed a distinctive portfolio of branding assets. It is the location of the well-known Al Jazeera news network, holds major international sporting events, and promotes cross-border exchanges in both culture and education. To combat fluctuations in the price of oil globally, diversifying one’s sources of income is a goal that both the UAE and Qatar share. The sharp decline in oil prices severely damaged the Gulf’s oil-dependent economies, highlighting the importance of branding now more than ever. These countries felt compelled to create and improve their nation-branding plans to ensure a more promising and diverse economic future (Zeineddine, 2017).

### 2.3. Saudi Arabia and its Vision 2030 Strategy

Several authors have analyzed the transformation of Saudi Arabia from an oil-based economy to a knowledge economy (Torregrosa Ramos, 2023). This transformation was carried out with the Vision 2030 strategy, designed and led by Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman. The prince's vision was to diversify the kingdom's revenue sources, reduce budget deficits, balance budgets, and promote long-term economic growth (Moshashai, Leber and Savage., 2018). It was an ambitious plan that called for significant changes to the country's fiscal and budgetary procedures and policies. The objectives were clear: to help Saudi Arabia build a healthier, more prosperous, sustainable and socially responsible future. In fact, these objectives are in the core of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations, which should interpolate all the countries. But, as with any grand undertaking, there were difficulties. The road to success was littered with political and institutional impediments. Many people questioned whether this vision could come true.

The Saudi project Vision 2030 has been academically analyzed from different perspectives: Economics (Allmnakrah and Evers, 2020), gender (Saleh and Malibari, 2021), sustainability (Rahman and Qattan, 2021), Communication (Almahraj, 2023), and geopolitical economy of sport (Chadwick and Widdop, 2022). Through Vision 2030, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia recognized the immense potential of soft power. Soft power is an intriguing concept; it is the ability to shape the preferences of others through culture, politics, and diplomacy (Nye, 2004; Burton and Naraine, 2023). In the case of Saudi Arabia, they saw an opportunity to increase their global influence. However, the journey into the realm of soft power entailed not only understanding its strengths but also the opposite, soft disempowerment. They were well aware of the challenges and complexities that lay ahead as they entered the world of sports. One notable aspect was mimetic isomorphism, a process in which Saudi Arabia attempted to replicate the successes and investments of other nations in global sports (Greenwood et al. 2008). They saw sporting events as a way to project their image and values to the rest of the world.

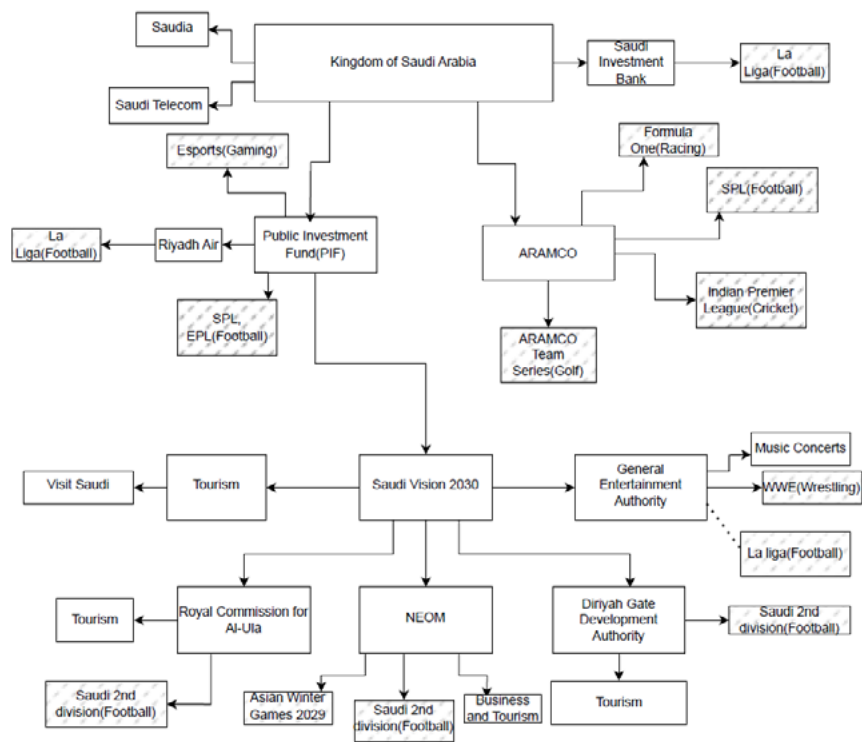
Therefore, in the recent years, Saudi Arabia engaged in the Formula 1 Grand Prix (2021), LIV Golf (2021), the Spanish Super Cup (2019), World Wrestling Entertainment and finally it has been awarded 2034 FIFA World Cup. Their stakes in these global sporting events were significant and strategic. They recognized the value of sponsorship and broadcast investment. Saudi Arabia hoped to strengthen its position on the global sporting stage through these efforts. Saudi Arabia's soft power initiatives in sports were about more than just the games; they were about a larger narrative of global influence, culture, and diplomacy (Chadwick and Widdop, 2022). As a result, Saudi Arabia's story of using sports as a tool for soft power has evolved, providing a unique perspective on the intersection of sports, politics, and diplomacy (Burton and Naraine, 2023).

Saudi Arabia has established itself as a major player in global sports and politics, with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the helm, and the Public Investment Fund (PIF) as a key investor and player (Torregrosa Ramos, 2023). There is, however, more to this story than meets the eye. A select group of influential individuals is steering Saudi Arabia's ambitious journey into international sports behind the scenes. A prince, a princess, a Harvard-educated businessman with a penchant for globetrotting, and a minister with deep roots in the military industry are among the key characters (Play the Game, 2023). They collaborate to oversee the Kingdom's sports initiatives and investments, all under the watchful eye of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's crown prince and prime minister.

While there has been much discussion about Saudi Arabia's investments and involvement in global sports, the Crown Prince has received a lot of attention. The pivotal figures who play a critical role in bolstering Saudi Arabia's influence in international sports remain in the shadows. Play the Game (2023) provides valuable insights into these key players in Saudi Arabia's sporting ambitions. The study delves into 795 positions across 156 Saudi entities and over 300 Saudi sports sponsorships, revealing significant conflicts of interest among influential Saudi statesmen. Furthermore, it raises concerns about Saudi Arabia's complex relationship between sports and politics (Play the Game, 2023). This report sheds light on a complex web of connections surrounding Saudi Arabia's state-run sports venture. This complex network poses significant challenges to sports' integrity, particularly in the context of values such as democracy, transparency, freedom of expression, and athletes' rights. It's a story that highlights the complex interplay between sports and politics on a global scale (Play the Game, 2023). According to Play the Game (2023), the general overview of organisations in the Saudi sports business is shown below.

To complement the previous researchers, Alsaaidi (2020) examined Saudi Arabia's X presence to get to the core of this digital revolution. The country's plan was discovered through an analysis of a vast collection of tweets and messages. The main concerns centered on the principles Saudi Arabia emphasized in the Vision 2030 messaging and how it conveyed its national branding. Saudi Arabia was making large investments in X to change the way the world saw the kingdom and its brand. X was more than just a venue; it was an effective tool for promoting the Kingdom's advancements in the social, political, and economic spheres. Saudi Arabia discovered an effective remedy—a bridge that linked the country with the global community—through X. It gave people a forum to discuss tales of creativity, development, and transformation. Every tweet was a dot in the expansive national brand creation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia thus used social media to create a new narrative that would influence its future and motivate people worldwide in the era of digital diplomacy. X served as a platform for the Kingdom to express its goals and aspirations, paving the way for a better future (Al Saidi, 2020).

**Figure 1.** General overview of Saudi investments in the Sport Business.



Source: Play the Game, 2023

### 3. Methodology

This research will follow a quantitative methodology based on the analysis of the main X accounts of the organizations and individuals that run the sports industry in Saudi Arabia. This analysis will be based on a month, from October 2023 to November 2023.

To do this analysis, we will use the tool Key Hole. Key Hole is a social media data reporting platform that measures real-time and historical data in an easy-to-use format using graphs, tables, and various forms of aggregation. In this analysis, the term *average likes per post* refers to the average number of likes that a social media post receives over a specific period or across a certain number of posts.

**Table 1.** Main X accounts of Saudi organizations with interests in sports

Name of the organization	Economic sector	X account	Description of the company
Al-Ula	Tourism	@RCU_SA	Tourist organization that manages historical heritage of the place of Al-Ula.
Aramco	Oil and Gas	@aramco	The main oil and gas company of Saudi Arabia.
CIC Saudi Arabia	Public Administration	@CICSaudi	Public communication consortium of Saudi Arabia
Diriyah Gate Development Authority	Tourism	@DGDA_SA	Tourist organization that manages historical heritage of the place of Diriyah.
Neom	Public Administration	@NEOM	Smart City Administration
PIF	Public administration	@PIF_en	Public Sovereign fund
Riyadh Air	Airline	@RiyadhAir	Airline company
Saudi Investment Bank	Banking	@SAIBLIVE	The national bank of Saudi Arabia
Saudi Telecom	Telecommunications	@stc_ksa	The national telecom company
Saudi Vision 2030	Public Administration	@SaudiVision2030	Public platform for economic development
Saudia	Airline	@SaudiAirlinesEn	Airline company
Visit Saudia	Tourism	@VisitSaudi	National tourist organization

Source: Compiled by authors.

Similarly, the term *average retweets per post* refers to the average number of retweets that a X post receives over a specific period or across a certain number of posts. The *engagement rate* is expressed as a percentage and is calculated based on the total number of engagements (likes, comments, shares, clicks, etc.) relative to the total audience or impressions. We analyzed the top six engaged tweets of each organization mentioned in table 1 and 2). A total of 72 tweets were analyzed, which represents the maximum number of tweets from the sample organizations that could be examined for free. The analysis considered their type of content and if this content was positive, neutral or negative for the global interests of Saudi Arabia. *Positive* tweets can be expressed as a favorable, optimistic, or happy sentiment. They often convey satisfaction, joy, excitement, appreciation, or positive experiences. *Neutral* tweets convey a lack of strong emotion or opinion. They are neither explicitly positive nor negative and may involve sharing information, facts,

**Table 2.** General overview of the data analyzed between October 2023 and November 2023

X account	Tweets this period	Engagements this period	Average likes per post	Average Retweets per post	Engagement rate (in percentage)
@RCU_SA	135	6407	35	13	0,6
@aramco	24	22658	829	115	0,02
@CICSaudi	106	357185	3,153	216	1,9
@DGDA_SA	47	2047	28	17	0,13
@NEOM	115	20643	129	50	0,14
@PIF_en	65	6142	90	13	0,03
@RiyadhAir	16	651	32	9	0,3
@SAIBLIVE	77	45	164	40	0,11
@stc_ksa	98	2464	21	5	0,08
@SaudiVision2030	24	5789	226	79	0,11
@SaudiAirlinesEn	89	7048	69	11	0,17
@VisitSaudi	37	1645	33	13	0,71

Source: Compiled by authors.

or casual observations. Finally, *Negative* tweets can be expressed as sentiment that is unfavorable, pessimistic, or discontented. They often convey dissatisfaction, frustration, disappointment, anger, or negative experiences.

To complement this quantitative method, the analysis also includes the review of significant databases in which we can find information about the global business of the Saudi sports industry. These databases include Deloitte and Transfer Market, which provided data that allow researches to do a triangulation with the X content analysis. This statistical data is also significant due to it offers contextual information about the football industry of Saudi Arabia.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Saudi place branding strategy: travel, economic development and sport

Saudi Arabia, nonetheless recognized as a rentier state (Chadwick, Widdop and Goldman, 2023), uses nation branding as an important tool to establish itself as

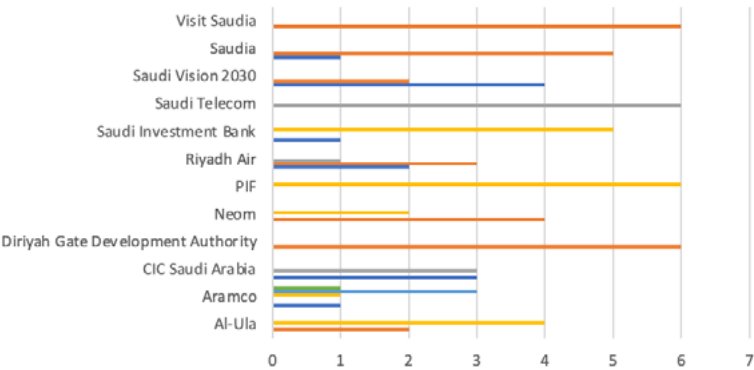
a major geopolitical force in the modern world (Burton and Naraine, 2023). The nation branding of Saudi Arabia was an integral aspect of the country's identity, not merely a government endeavour (Alsaaidi, 2020). The key concern was how to convey this identity and the various values it stood for, particularly in light of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030, the ambitious plan for the future of the nation (Alsaaidi, 2020).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund is called the Public Investment Fund (PIF) (Torregrosa Ramos, 2023). It is an investment fund under government control that was set up to invest in a range of domestic and foreign industries and aid in the diversification of the Saudi economy. The PIF was established to oversee the kingdom's investment funds, produce long-term gains, and assist with projects aimed at development and economic expansion. It is essential for financing important initiatives, encouraging creativity, and expanding the nation's investment portfolio in a variety of sectors, such as infrastructure, real estate, technology, and more. As part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 plan to lessen its reliance on oil and transform its economy, the PIF's investments have drawn a lot of attention recently, especially in fields like technology, entertainment, and sports (Play the Game, 2023).

The Saudi government does not, however, only invest in the sporting sector through PIF. As it was shown in Figure 1, there is an organization complex with interests in the sports business. The majority of them are involved in strategically important business sectors of the Saudi economy, like banking services, telecommunications, and the export of oil and gas. In Figure 2, we show the most engaged tweets by category of Saudi Arabia's top-12 organizations in the sports business, according to Figure 1.

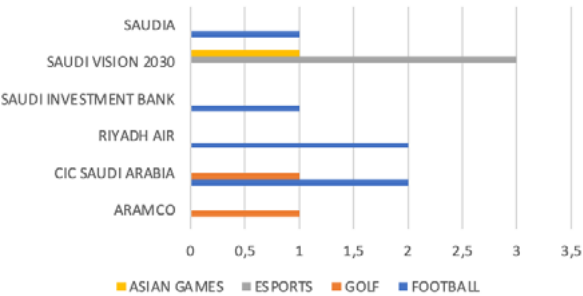
We discovered the diverse landscape of topics that these organizations were involved with in Figure 2. A total of 72 tweets were thoroughly analyzed, revealing a story of ambition and dedication. At the top of the list was Tourism and Travel, which captured the hearts and minds of the digital audience with a staggering 38.89% share of the tweets. This was a clear indication of Saudi Arabia's determination to invite the rest of the world to visit its captivating destinations. Following closely behind was Economic Development, which had a sizable 25% share. These organizations were vested in propelling the country's economic growth onto the global stage. Sports, the narrative's heartbeat, accounted for a respectable 16.67% of the tweets, celebrating athleticism, competition, and national pride. The remaining 19.44% of tweets were about Politics, Media, Climate Change, and Education. This mosaic of topics painted a comprehensive picture of Saudi Arabia's engagement strategy, focusing not only on sports but also on the many facets of modern society.

**Figure 2.** Most engaged tweets by category of Saudi Arabia’s top twelve organizations in the sports business.



Source: Compiled by authors.

**Figure 3.** Most engaged tweets about sport, by category, of Saudi Arabia’s top twelve organizations in the sports business.

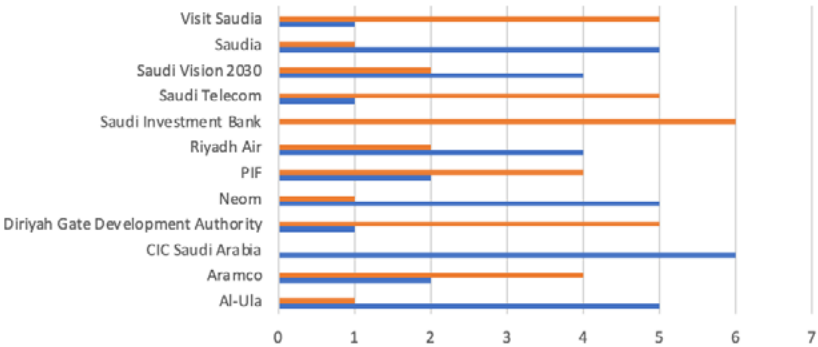


Source: Compiled by authors.

Our analysis continued as we moved into Figure 3, which revealed the vibrant world of sports engagement. We discovered an intriguing truth here: Football emerged as the clear winner, accounting for an impressive 50% of all sports-related tweets. This wasn’t just a game but a testament to football’s magnetic pull and ability to galvanize global audiences. However, the analysis does not end there. Esports has emerged as a rising star, accounting for 25% of all sports tweets. It reflected the growing popularity of digital gaming and competitive esports in Saudi Arabia. Golf and the Asian Games worked together to complete the analy-



**Figure 4.** Positive, neutral and negative tweets reported by the analysed organizations. Global overview.



Source: Compiled by authors.

sis, each contributing a significant 25%. The fact that football, the beautiful game, was a cornerstone of Saudi Arabia’s global visibility in the world of sports nation branding was most striking. These tweets were more than just digital footprints; they were global echoes of a nation’s passion and dreams.

Finally, our analysis shows how the content of tweets links (positive, negative, neutral) with the interests of Saudi Arabia (see Figure 4). The analysis highlights that those X accounts that belong directly to public administration organizations, or tourism (CIC, Neom, PIF, Saudi Vision 2030, Al-Ula, Diriyah Gate and Visit Saudia) usually report more in a positive manner, than those accounts which belong to companies from other economic sectors (banking, telecommunications and airline companies). However, we should report that none of the accounts report about Saudi Arabia in a negative way, strengthening the idea that all these organization participate in a global strategy of geopolitical repositioning of the country (Chadwick and Widdop, 2022; Chadwick, Widdop and Goldman, 2023).

4.2. The significance of football in the Saudi sports place branding strategy

Saudi Arabia’s investment in football became shockwaves when they took over English Premier League Club Newcastle United in October 2021. PIF took over 80% of the club’s ownership from former owner Mike Ashley with the rest ownership shared between RB Sports media and Amanda Staveley’s PCP Capital partners.

Saudi Arabia made a significant impact in the sports world in the summer of 2023. Even though they had long made significant sports investments, this year

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/adcomunica.7776>

was special. They were successful in attracting some of the most well-known and lucrative football players in the world to play in their home league, the Saudi Pro League (SPL), like table 3 shows. Cristiano Ronaldo’s January 2023 transfer from Manchester United to Al-Nassr was the most notable move. However, that was only the start. Other elite players including Brazilian sensation Neymar and French 2022 Ballon d’Or winner Karim Benzema also arrived in Saudi Arabia during the same summer transfer window. These actions grabbed everyone’s attention and sent shockwaves through the sports world.

**Table 3.** Most valuable transfers to the Saudi Pro League between 2018 to 2023.

Player Name	Nationality	Season	Joined	From	Market Value at the time of transfer	Transfer Fee
Neymar Jr	Brazil	2023/24	Al-Hilal	PSG	€60.00m	€90.00m
Otavio	Portugal	2023/24	Al-Nassr	Porto	€35.00m	€60.00m
Malcom	Brazil	2023/24	Al-Hilal	Zenit	€30.00m	€60.00m
Ruben Neves	Portugal	2023/24	Al-Hilal	Wolves	€40.00m	€55.00m
Aleksander Mitrovic	Serbia	2023/24	Al-Hilal	Fulham	€28.00m	€52.60m
Milinkovic Savic	Serbia	2023/24	Al-Hilal	Lazio	€50.00m	€40.00m
Fabinho	Brazil	2023/24	Al-Ittihad	Liverpool	€42.00m	€46.70m
Gabri Veiga	Spain	2023/24	Al-Ahli	Celta Vigo	€30.00m	€40.00m
Riyad Mahrez	Algeria	2023/24	Al-Ahli	Manchester City	€20.00m	€35.00m
Seko Fofana	Ivory Coast	2023/24	Al-Nassr	Lens	€32.00m	€25.00m
Saint-Maximin	France	2023/24	Al-Ahli	Newcastle United	€32.00m	€27.20m
Sadio Mane	Cameroon	2023/24	Al-Nassr	Bayern Munich	€25.00m	€30.00m
Roger Ibanez	Brazil	2023/24	Al-Ahli	AS Roma	€13.00m	€30.00m
Jota	Portugal	2023/24	Al-Ittihad	Celtic	€90.00m	€29.10m
Aymeric Laporte	Spain	2023/24	Al-Nassr	Manchester City	€25.00m	€27.50m
Yanik Carrasco	Belgium	2023/24	Al-Shabab	Atletico Madrid	€25.00m	€15.00m
Frank Kessie	Ivory Coast	2023/24	Al-Ahli	Barcelona	€25.00m	€12.50m
Karim Benzema	France	2023/24	Al-Ittihad	Real Madrid	€25.00m	Free

**Table 3. (cont.)** Most valuable transfers to the Saudi Pro League between 2018 to 2023.

Player Name	Nationality	Season	Joined	From	Market Value at the time of transfer	Transfer Fee
Marcelo Brozovic	Croatia	2023/24	Al-Nassr	Inter Milan	€25.00m	€18.00m
Kalidou Koulibaly	Senegal	2023/24	Al-Hilal	Chelsea	€15.00m	€23.00m
Luiz Felipe	Italy	2023/24	Al-Ittihad	Real Betis	€15.00m	€22.00m
Bono	Morocco	2023/24	Al-Hilal	Sevilla	€12.00m	€21.00m
Merih Demiral	Turkey	2023/24	Al-Ahli	Atlanta	€20.00m	€20.00m
Cristiano Ronaldo	Portugal	2022/23	Al-Nassr	Manchester United	€20.00m	Free
Demarai Gray	Jamaica	2023/24	Al-Ettifaq	Everton	€20.00m	€9.30m
Edouard Mendy	Senegal	2023/24	Al-Ahli	Chelsea	€12.00m	€18.50m
Roberto Firmino	Brazil	2023/24	Al-Ahli	Liverpool	€18.00m	Free
Habib Diallo	Senegal	2023/24	Al-Shabab	Strasbourg	€18.00m	€18.00m
Matheus Pereira	Portugal	2021/22	Al-Hilal	West Brom	€15.00m	€18.00m
Ahmed Musa	Nigeria	2018/19	Al-Nassr	Leicester	€15.00m	€16.00m

Source: Transfer Market, 2023.

**Table 4.** Total number of transfers and transfer amount paid by the Saudi Pro League (SPL) in 2022-23 and 2023-24 seasons.

Season	Total no	Transfer Amount Paid (in million Euros)
2022/23	277	43,796
2023/24	320	956,88
Total	597	1,000,076

Source: Transfer Market, 2023.

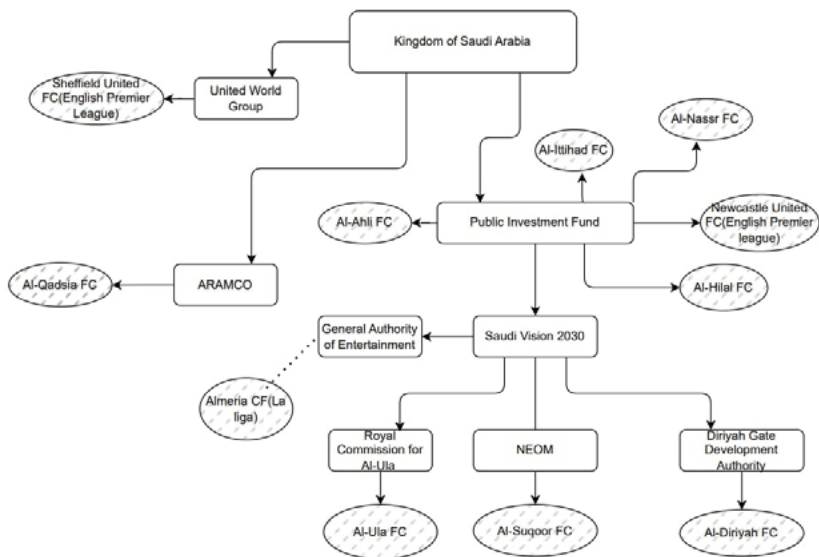
Mohammed bin Salman's «Sports Clubs Investments and Privatisation Project» was the driving force behind a remarkable development in Saudi Arabian football in the summer of 2023. Al-Ahli, Al-Ittihad, Al-Hilal, and Al-Nassr are the four SPL clubs that the Public Investment Fund (PIF), Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, now owns as a result of this initiative. After the ownership changed, these clubs were able to receive significant funding from a sovereign wealth fund with nearly US\$800 billion in assets (Play the Game, 2023). Simultaneously, four other clubs namely Al-Ula FC, Al-Diriyah FC, Al Qadsia FC and Al-Suqoor FC came under the jurisdiction of state-owned entities –the Royal Commission for Al-Ula, the Diriyah Gate Development Authority, the Saudi oil giant Aramco, and Neom, a massive futuristic mega-city project in the northwest.

These teams' ability to pay football players extraordinarily high salaries was made possible by their financial support, which in turn led to some shocking transfer fees. SPL teams invested a net total of 907 million US dollars in player acquisitions during the summer of 2023 (Deloitte, 2023), 956,88 million euros according to Transfer Market (see Table 4). With the English Premier League spending 1.39 billion US dollars on player acquisitions in the same time frame, they are now the second-highest spending league in the world.

As Rein and Shields (2007) state, a sports place branding strategy can be structured by attracting talent, foreign investment and hosting mega-events. In that sense, apart from the huge investments of Saudi industry in talent (players, managers and coaches), the country has also improved its international commercial deals (for example, Riyadh Air with Atletico de Madrid, Saudi Investment Bank with Real Madrid, Visit Saudi with LaLiga), the shareholding investments in foreign leagues (see Figure 5), as well as it has become a hosting country for football-mega events: the Supercups of Spain, Italy and Turkey. LaLiga has a sponsorship deal with Visit Saudi for 20 million euros per year, for ten years. Similarly, the deal to host Italian Supercup in Saudi Arabia is worth 138 million euros till 2028/2029.

Consequently, the fact that Saudi Arabia has been awarded with the FIFA World Cup 2034 demonstrates that the country could follow a similar sport place branding strategy as its neighbor Qatar (Ginesta and San Eugenio, 2014). However, it's early to know if the World Cup will give Saudi Arabia the opportunity to do the number of structural changes that Qatar did (Brannagan, Reiche and Bedwell, 2023).

**Figure 5.** Flow chart of Saudi Arabia organizations and main individuals with interests in the football industry.



Source: Play the Game, 2023.

**5. Conclusions**

The patterns of participation in Saudi Arabia’s top sports organizations tell an enthralling story of diversification and commitment. The 72 tweets examined reflect a positive multifaceted approach to nation branding in a landscape marked by diverse interests. Tourism and Travel emerges as a focal point, capturing the imaginations of global audiences and demonstrating the country’s eagerness to welcome the world to its enthralling destinations. The emphasis on Economic Development demonstrates a dedication to projecting Saudi Arabia’s economic growth and potential on a global scale. Meanwhile, Sports makes a significant contribution by celebrating athleticism, competition, and national pride. A jumble of tweets touches on Politics and Media, Climate Change, and Education, painting a comprehensive picture of Saudi Arabia’s multifaceted engagement strategy, which includes not only sports but also various aspects of modern society.

Within the realm of sports, football reigns supreme, accounting for 50% of all sports-related tweets. Football has evolved into a symbol of Saudi Arabia's global visibility in sports nation branding. It reaches a global audience, highlighting the sport's universal appeal. Esports is a rising star that reflects the country's adaptability to modern sports trends and the growing popularity of digital gaming. The Golf and Asian Games segments round out the story, adding significantly to overall sports engagement.

These findings highlight football's attraction as well as the Saudi Arabian sports landscape's adaptability to changing times. Hence, according to our objectives, and considering the results of previous researchers (Ginesta and San Eugenio, 2014; Rein and Shields, 2007; Brannagan, Reiche and Bedwell, 2023), we can conclude that Saudi Arabia has developed a government-centric sports place branding strategy to enhance its geopolitical positioning (Chadwick, Widdop and Goldman, 2023).

Saudi Arabia has also made headlines in the sports world in recent years for its strategic investments, most notably its takeover of English Premier League club Newcastle United and the remarkable summer of 2023. The signing of football superstars such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar, and Karim Benzema for the Saudi Pro League (SPL) demonstrates the country's clout in the sporting world. The «Sports Clubs Investments and Privatisation Project» of Mohammed bin Salman has been a driving force, resulting in the Public Investment Fund (PIF) owning several SPL clubs. The SPL is now the world's second-highest spending league, thanks to massive investments in player acquisitions during the summer of 2023. Saudi Arabia's vision goes beyond sports; it is a journey of nation branding, transcending traditional labels and establishing the country as a global player.

However, the study is exploratory and descriptive, due to it only focuses on a specific set of organizations and tweets, which may not be representative of Saudi Arabia's overall nation branding strategy. The findings are unique to these organizations and may not apply to all sectors or regions of the country. The findings of the study are based on a specific period, and social media trends and engagement can change over time. The dynamics of nation branding and sports engagement can shift quickly, and the study may miss long-term trends or changes.

The lack of qualitative analysis is another limitation. While the study provides useful quantitative insights, in a future analysis it should be complemented with a qualitative dimension. Qualitative analysis could have revealed the complexities, motivations, and sentiments behind the tweets, adding to our understanding of nation branding strategies and the impact of sports engagement. The findings of the study, which are based on quantitative data, may not fully capture the underlying context and depth of meaning inherent in the tweets but they are significant to situate a starting point for all those researchers that want to analyse the sport place branding strategy of Saudi Arabia.

## References

- Allmnakrah, Alhasan and Evers, Colin (2020). The need for a fundamental shift in the Saudi education system: Implementing the Saudi Arabian economic vision 2030. In: *Research in education*, Vol.106, n1. London: Sage, 22–40. DOI: 10.1177/0034523719851534
- Almahraj, Yazeed Abdullah (2023). British press coverage of international sports events hosted by Saudi Arabia: content analysis study in light of country concept model. In: *Humanities and social sciences communications*, Vol. 10, n1. DOI: 10.1057/s41599-023-02266-w.
- Alsaaidi, Hala Zayed (2020). Nation Branding and The Case of Saudi Vision 2030 and The Use of Twitter. Thesis. RIT Scholar Works. Retrieved 26 January 2024 at <https://scholarworks.rit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=11755&context=theses>
- Anholt, Simon (2003). *Brand New Justice. How branding places and products can help the developing world*. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Brannagan, Paul M.; Reiche, Danyel and Bedwell, Lorraine (2023). Mass social change and identity hybridization: the case of Qatar and the 2022 FIFA World Cup. In: *Identities*, Vol. 30, n6. New York: Taylor & Francis, 900–918. DOI: 10.1080/1070289x.2023.2203576.
- Briciu, V-A, Rezeanu, C-I and Briciu, A. (2020). Online Place Branding: Is Geography ‘Destiny’ in a ‘Space of Flows’ World?. In: *Sustainability*, Vol.12, n10, Basilea: MDPI, 4073. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/sul2104073>
- Burton, Nicholas and Naraine Michael L. (2023). Sport and Saudi Arabia: Mimetic Isomorphism, Soft Power, and Disempowerment. In Simon Chadwick, Paul Widdop, Micheal M. Goldman (eds.) *The Geopolitical Economy of Sport*. New York: Routledge.
- Caiazza, R. and Audretsch, D. (2015). Can a sport mega-event support hosting city’s economical, socio-cultural and political development?. In: *Tourism Management Perspectives*, Vol. 14. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1–2. DOI: 10.1016/j.tmp.2015.01.001.
- Chadwick, Simon and Widdop, Paul (2022). Saudi Arabia and sport in the 21st century. In: Danyel Reiche and Paul Michael Brannagan (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Sport in the Middle East*. London: Routledge.
- Chadwick, Simon; Widdop, Paul and Goldman, Michael M. (eds.) (2023). *The geopolitical economy of sport: Power, politics, money, and the state*. London: Routledge.
- Dinnie, Keith (2007). *Nation branding*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Fernández, Manuel L. and Villar, Fernando R. C. (2022). Rol de un equipo profesional de fútbol en el desarrollo de una marca ciudad: una revisión de la literatura. In: *SciELO Preprints*, DOI: 10.1590/scielopreprints.4987.

Fuller, Andy (2017). Soccer and the city: the game and its fans in Solo and Yogyakarta. In: *Sport in Society*, Vol.20, n5-6. New York: Taylor & Francis, 675-688. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2016.1158470>

Ginesta, Xavier and De San Eugenio, Jordi (2014). The Use of Football as a Country Branding Strategy. Case Study: Qatar and the Catalan Sports Press. In: *Communication and Sport*, Vol.2, n3. London: Sage, 225-241.

Ginesta, Xavier (2017). The business of stadia: Maximizing the use of Spanish football venues. In: *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, Vol.17, n4. London: Sage, 411-423. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1467358416646608>

Ginesta, Xavier (2022). *Las multinacionales del entretenimiento. Fútbol, diplomacia, identidad y tecnología*. Barcelona: Editorial UOC.

Greenwood, Royston; Oliver, Christine; Larence, Thomas B. and Meyer, Renate E. (eds.) (2008). *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*. London: Sage.

Kavaratzis, M. and Ashworth, G. (2008). Place marketing: how did we get here and where are we going? . In: *Journal of place management and development*, Vol.1, n2. Leeds: Emerald, 150-165. DOI: 10.1108/17538330810889989.

Kavaratzis, Mihalis and Hatch, M. J. (2013). The dynamics of place brands: An identity-based approach to place branding theory. In: *Marketing theory*, 13(1), pp. 69-86. DOI: 10.1177/1470593112467268.

Llopis-Goig, Ramón (2016). Deporte, medios de comunicación y sociedad. In: *RI-CYDE. Revista Internacional de Ciencias del Deporte*, Vol.XII, n44. Madrid: Ramón Cantó Alcaraz: 86-89.

Lubowiecki-Vikuk, Adrian and Basińska-Zych, Agata (2011). Sport and Tourism as elements of place branding. A case study on Poland. In: *Journal of Tourism Challenges and Trends*. Vol.IV. Bucarest: CEEOL: 33-52.

Mañas Viniegra, Luís (2018). La aportación internacional de la marca Real Madrid a la ciudad de Madrid (España) como destino turístico de eventos deportivos. In: *Turismo y sociedad*, n24. Bogotá: UEC, 129-148. DOI: 10.18601/01207555.n24.06.

Moshashai, Daniel; Leber, Andrew M. and Savage, James D. (2020). Saudi Arabia plans for its economic future: Vision 2030, the National Transformation Plan and Saudi fiscal reform. In: *British journal of Middle Eastern studies*, Vol.47, n3. New York: Taylor & Francis, 381-401. DOI: 10.1080/13530194.2018.1500269.

Nye, Joseph S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. New York: PublicAffairs.

Pan, Hao (2019). *The Role of Sport in City Branding: A Case Study of Ottawa*. Doctoral dissertation. Ottawa: University of Ottawa.



Pousada, Isaac & Urdampilleta, Aritz (2012). Gestión de los grandes eventos deportivos y su alto nivel de repercusión social. . In: *Lecturas: Educación física y deportes*, Vol.17 , n169. Buenos Aires: Tulio Guterman: 5-8.

Rahman, Redwanur R. and Qattan, Ameerah (2021). Vision 2030 and sustainable development: State capacity to revitalize the healthcare system in Saudi Arabia. In: *Inquiry: a journal of medical care organization, provision and financing*, n58. London: Sage: 46958020984682. DOI: 10.1177/0046958020984682.

Richelieu, Andre (2018). A sport-oriented place branding strategy for cities, regions and countries. In: *Sport Business and Management An International Journal*, Vol.8, n4. Leeds, Emerald: 354–374. DOI: 10.1108/sbm-02-2018-0010.

Roberts, Annette; Roche, Neil; Jones, Calvin and Munday, Max. (2016). What is the value of a Premier League football club to a regional economy?. In: *European sport management quarterly*, Vol.16, n5. New York: Taylor & Francis: 575–591. DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2016.1188840.

Saleh, W. and Malibari, A. (2021). Saudi women and vision 2030: Bridging the gap?. In: *Behavioral sciences*, Vol.11, n10. Basilea: MDPI: 132. DOI: 10.3390/bs11100132.

Deloitte (2023). Saudi Pro League clubs spend US\$957 M in record-breaking football. *Deloitte*. Retrieved 26 January 2024 at <https://www2.deloitte.com/xe/en/pages/about-deloitte/press-releases/saudi-pro-league-clubs-spend-us957-million-in-record-breaking-football.html>

Elsborg, Stanis (2023). *The power players behind Saudi Arabia's sports strategy*. *Playthegame.org*. Retrieved 26 January 2024 at <https://www.playthegame.org/news/the-power-players-behind-saudi-arabias-sports-strategy/>

Theodoropoulou, Irene and Alos, Julieta (2020). Expect amazing! Branding Qatar as a sports tourism destination. In: *Visual communication*, Vol.19, n1. London: Sage, 13–43. DOI: 10.1177/1470357218775005.

Torregrosa Ramos, Natalia (2023). La Visión 2030 en Arabia Saudita. Documento de Análisis *IEEE*. Retrieved 26 January 2024 at [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2023/DIEEEA24\\_2023\\_NATTOR\\_Arabia.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2023/DIEEEA24_2023_NATTOR_Arabia.pdf)

Walker, Scott (2023). Rentier state theory 50 Years on: New developments. In: *Frontiers in Political Science*, Vol.5. DOI: 10.3389/fpos.2023.1120439.

Webb, Andrew & Richelieu, André (2016). Sport for Development and Peace in Action. In: *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Vol.40, n5. London: Sage, 432–456. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723516632574>

Zeineddine, Cornelia (2017). Employing nation branding in the Middle East - United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar. In: *Management and Marketing*, Vol.12, n2. Berlin: De Gruyter, 208–221. DOI: 10.1515/mmcks-2017-0013.

Zomeño-Jiménez, Daniel & Pallarés-Renau, María (2020). La figura del influencer en la generación de contenido deportivo para las marcas de territorio. In: Rocío Blay Arráez, M. Teresa Benlloch Osuna & Guillermo Sanahuja Peris (eds.). *Marca, territorio y deporte. Un triángulo estratégico en la gestión de intangibles comunicativos*. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch.