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**Winning FIFA World Cup Bids:  
Country Image Analysis as a Tool to Understand and Secure Bids  
A Moroccan Case Study**

**Hamelin Nicolas, Bachleda Catherine, Saiagh Oumnia**

School of Business Administration, Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco

**Correspondence with:**

**Nicolas Hamelin**

[n.hamelin@au.ma](mailto:n.hamelin@au.ma)

School of Business Administration

Al Akhawayn University

Ifrane, Morocco 53000

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to apply country image analysis to understanding and securing a successful host country FIFA bid with Morocco as a case study. Country image was conceptualized as having cognitive and personality dimensions. The findings revealed the most salient elements upon which Morocco's country image is built and provide a strong foundation for any future world cup bidding committee to promote or reposition perceptual aspects of Morocco's country image.

**Keywords:** country image; FIFA; Bids; Morocco

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**Introduction**

The FIFA World Cup is an international association football competition contested by the senior men's national teams of the members of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the sport's global governing body. Since the first tournament in 1930, the championship has been awarded every four years, except in 1942 and 1946 when it was not held because of the Second World War (Monks and Husch, 2009).

The final tournament features the 32 national teams who have qualified for a place in the final competing over a month in a host nation. The national football associations of those countries which wish to be considered as a host submit a bid to FIFA. A host country is chosen in a vote by FIFA's Executive Committee (FIFA, 2011).

In 2006, Morocco alongside South Africa, Tunisia and Egypt was among the first Arab and African countries to submit a bid to host the 2010 World Cup. FIFA reported that Morocco not only had one of the strongest financial bids, but also had good infrastructure, good potential attendance given its proximity to Europe and a strong football identity with many Moroccan's playing at international level (M. Zeghari, member of the organizing committee for the Morocco 2010 bid, personal communication, 11 October 2010). However in spite of the Moroccan 2010 bid being one of the most promising, FIFA ruled in favor of South Africa.

Cornelissen's (2004) analysis of the Moroccan and South African bids shows that both countries used ideological and emotive arguments to position their respective bids. Both presented Africa as a continent that has long been neglected by the western world and as such deserved to host the FIFA final. Cornelissen (2004) argues that this representation of Africa 'both challenged and reinforced predominant conceptions of the marginalization of the African continent'. Morocco's position was rendered even more complex by ongoing conflict over the Western Sahara region which meant it could not rely on support from the African Union. Therefore the Moroccan bid emphasized its strong European links. The bid highlighted not only Morocco's geographical proximity and cultural and historical ties to Europe, but also outlined how a significant portion of

investment to support the bid would be provided by French and Spanish-owned or backed firms. This may have reinforced the negative representation of Morocco as a weak country unable to provide for itself (ibid).

This paper argues that although well prepared, the 2010 Moroccan bidding committee had little understanding of how Morocco might be perceived as a host country. It suggests that the Moroccan bid might have been more successful had it emphasized the significant country features that might impact positively upon on FIFA's final decision rather than focus on its European ties.

Until recently, the selection criteria for host contests were seen by FIFA to be so sensitive that they remained a secret. Bidding nations were sent a copy of the criteria but only on the condition that they weren't disclosed to any outside party (Pearce, 2010). Even though FIFA have since improved transparency in its selection criteria, the latest 2010 decision where Qatar was chosen over England in spite of England having a higher report score was still controversial (France 24, 2010). Arguably part of the problem is that although the selection criteria aim to be as quantitative as possible, voting is often a subjective process where politics and country image perception play a key role (Chauduri, 2010).

The purpose of this research was to apply country image analysis to understanding and securing a successful host country FIFA bid. The country image perception of Morocco was analyzed using a sample of international tourists along three scales: two cognitive and one personality based. One cognitive scale based on Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) country image studies measured respondent beliefs about Moroccan features such as shopping, entertainment, nature, accommodation and transportation. The other cognitive scale based on Martin and Eroglu's (1993) work measured beliefs about Morocco's economic, technological and political environment. Finally, the personality scale which was based on d'Astous et al.'s (2007) work measured Morocco's perceived personality traits.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: drawing on previous literature the benefits of hosting a world cup, the selection criteria used to decide on the winning bid and dimensions of country image are outlined in the next three sections. This is followed by an outline of the research methodology, the results of the study and implications, the study conclusions and finally the study limitations.

## Literature Review

### ***Hosting Benefits***

Winning the bid to host a mega-sporting event can be of political benefit (Sturgess & Brady, 2006; Harvey, 1989; Hall, 2006), economic benefit (Smith, 2005; Torisu, 2006; Galdini, 2007) and social benefit (Lakshman, 2008; Matheson, 2009; Feddresen et al., 2008), partly due to increased tourism. Although there is a tendency to over-estimate the economic benefit of such events (Szymanski, 2002), there are without doubt other non-monetary advantages to hosting a mega-sporting event. Analyzing the impact of the 2002 world cup in Korea using pre and post game data Kim et al. (2006) for example found that the world cup brought cultural exchange benefits, as well as the expected economic benefits. In South Africa, the event was used as “a lever for the economic empowerment of (almost exclusively black) communities disadvantaged under apartheid and formerly excluded from participation in the national tourism economy” (Rogerson, 2009). Over 373,000 World Cup tourists spent about 8.8 billion rand during the month long tournament (Mbizwo, 2010).

Arguably, however the real gain of hosting a mega sport event is not the short term benefits due to increased tourism during the event but the improvement of host country image. Singh and Hu (2008) for example in analyzing the 2004 Olympic Athens games found mega events play a significant role in destination marketing. Smith (2005) found mega sporting events impact on destination image formation. And Sung et al., 2011 found that event quality perceptions positively influence destination image. Indeed Jaffe and Nebenzehl (1993) in a study that examined Israeli opinions before and after the 1988 South Korean Olympic Games found that the mega-event positively influenced South Korea country image. Further Singapore's conventional image of being overly regulated and rather boring was rejuvenated by the Grand Prix when it promoted a livelier and more glamorous image of the nation (Henderson 2010). Matos (2006) refers to the “holy trinity of mega events benefits”: economic growth, infrastructure legacies and image promotion. Florek et al. (2007) in their study of New Zealand football supporters before, during and after attending the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany found 76.7% of respondents had a very positive perception of the country after they took part in the event compared to 19.4% before. Change in country image perception impacts the country product image and subsequently consumer behavior intentions regarding product purchase and tourism (Gripsrud et al, 2010). Hallmann and Breuer (2010) for

example demonstrated a positive impact between sports events and destination behavioral intentions.

So how are bids to host mega sporting events and in particular the World Cup evaluated?

### ***Host Selection***

World Cup host bids are assessed according to numerous criteria. Bancroft-Hinchey (2010) suggests decision criteria include the adequacy of media facilities, security, tourism and IT infrastructure. Swart and Bob (2007) also identify factors such as accountability, political support, relationship marketing, ability, infrastructure, bid-team competition, communication exposure and existing facilities as decisive for a successful bid.

Ingerson and Westerbeek (2000) following a review of the literature found eight criteria that are important to the success of a bid for hallmark sporting events. Of these eight criteria five (political, economic, media, infrastructure and technical) were argued to be imperative for a successful bid whereas the remaining three (socio-cultural impact, competitive and business support) were seen to be of lesser importance. The results of their subsequent qualitative study in which six highly experienced bid campaigners from four countries were interviewed found building relations, building brand equity, commitment, guaranteed added value, a legacy, bidding experience, bid team composition and creative statistics to be critical in the process of bidding for a hallmark sporting event.

In a later study Westerbeek et al. (2002) using an international sample of 135 event owners and organizers uncovered eight factors that explained almost 70% of all variance in relation to critical issues in the process of bidding for hallmark sporting events. Four of these factors (classed as operational aspects of organizing the event) were seen to be vital to securing a successful bid: ability to organize the event, political support, infrastructure and existing facilities. The remaining factors: communication and exposure, accountability, bid team composition and relationship marketing were perceived as important supporting factors but not vital to the success of the bid (ibid).

Interestingly, the authors went on to argue that because the four factors perceived as vital for a successful bid are tangible and met through physical proof of competency, this makes them easier to manage. Thus most of the top bids are likely to be on an even par because the tangible factors of event-organizing skills, facilities and infrastructure

can all be bought subject to available resources (ibid). In contrast the four supporting factors which represent the capacity of the bid team and country to present a positive image are largely intangible, so it is within these four factors that distinct competitive differences between event-bidding entities are most likely to emerge. Thus the decision over which entity will gain the right to host the event is likely to be based upon competitive advantage in relation to one or more of the supporting factors (ibid). Arguably the 2010 host bids support this proposition. South Africa and Morocco were both seen to have the necessary infrastructure and technical capacity to host the 2010 World Cup, yet South Africa was chosen over Morocco because it was able to present a more positive country image (Cornelissen, 2004).

### ***Country Image***

Country image can be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions individuals have of attributes and activities available in a country (Crompton, 1979; Gartner, 1986; Hunt, 1975) and is the formation of overall mental pictures (imagery) of that country (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993).

Gunn (1972) in an early conceptualization suggests country or destination image comprises an organic component derived from newspapers, magazines and the opinions of friends and an induced component derived from exposure to advertisements and commercial promotions.

More recently, country image has been seen to comprise both cognitive and affective components (Dichter, 1985; Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Kotler et al., 1993; Verlegh, 2001; Sönmez and Sirakaya, 2002). Verlegh (2001) for example defined country image as being formed by “a mental network of affective and cognitive associations connected to the country”.

The cognitive component of country image is seen to capture beliefs and knowledge about a country. It can be represented in part by a country's tangible physical attributes (Pike and Ryan, 2004) and in part by a country's degree of economic and political maturity, technological skill, industrialization, history, culture and traditions (Allred et al, 1999; Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Desborde, 1990; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Ekinci and Hosnay, 2006). Echtner and Ritchie (1993) for example in their operationalization of country image include physical attributes such as a country's transport, accommodation, infrastructure, security, shopping, entertainment and choice

of activities; whereas Martin and Eroglu (1993) suggest political, economic and technological factors capture the cognitive dimensions of country image.

The affective component of country image is seen to capture emotions and feelings about a country (Askegaard and Ger, 1997; Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Ekinci and Hosnay, 2006; Verlegh, 2001). Walmsley and Young (1998) for example, based on work by Russell (1980), used four bipolar items to operationalize the affective component namely; distressing/relaxing, gloomy/exciting, sleepy/arousing and unpleasant/pleasant.

In a similar vein (albeit related to brand image) Biel (1993) suggests that image comprises hard (tangible, cognitive or functional) attributes that include the physical attributes of a product and soft (emotional or affective) attributes. Interestingly in this view brand personality is seen as the soft, affective side of brand image (ibid). Likewise, Martineau (1958) in his article 'The Personality of the Retail Store' also makes a distinction between the functional and psychological components of image. Characteristics such as prices and retail store layout are considered functional as they are directly observable or measurable, whereas characteristics such as friendliness or store atmosphere are considered psychological (ibid). Martineau emphasizes that both of these components play a critical role in determining the image of a store (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003).

The concept of personality being linked to country image has been explored in the literature by a number of researchers including d'Astous and Boujbel (2007) who suggest that countries like brands and stores may be represented in people's minds in terms of personality dimensions. In their study of country personality they identified six personality traits that people use when they think of countries: agreeableness, wickedness, assiduousness, snobbism, conformity and unobtrusiveness.

In the present study country image is viewed as having both a cognitive-based component in accord with Echtner and Richie (1993) and Martin and Eroglu's (1993) conceptualization and a personality based component in accord with the view taken by Martineau (1958) and d'Astous and Boujbel (2007).

For both the cognitive and personality dimensions certain criteria have more weight than others when it comes to evaluating a country. Reynolds (1965) for example describes the formation of country image as the development of a mental construct based upon a few impressions chosen from a flood of information. Arguably, therefore it is critically important for a host country bidding committee to understand how their



country image is perceived so that specific qualifying or disqualifying attributes can be promoted or repositioned.

## **Methodology**

### **Sample**

Data was collected using an intercept approach. International tourists were randomly intercepted in the main parking area for tourist buses, at local hotels and local tourist cafés in the towns of Azrou and Ifrane in Morocco. Azrou and Ifrane were chosen partly for convenience and partly because they are popular tourist destinations and a customary stop for tourists on their way to the Sahara desert (Maréchal et al., 2011). Data collection via an intercept approach was selected because it enabled the researchers to access potential respondents over a short period of time, screen potential respondents and allowed respondents to seek clarification of questions if needed. It is also commonly used in marketing research (McDaniel and Gates, 2010) and has been used in previous country image studies (see for example Hsieh et al., 2004; Keillor and Hult, 1999; Pappu et al., 2007).

After approaching a potential participant, introducing themselves and giving a brief explanation of the study, interviewers invited eligible respondents to complete a self-administered questionnaire. Only those individuals who were international visitors, aware of the world cup and FIFA and did not have a language problem were considered eligible. The screening process was a key reason for the relatively small sample; only one hundred and fifty eligible respondents were identified during the collection period.

For respondent convenience the questionnaire was made available in three languages: English, French and Spanish. Multilingual interviewers were available to answer respondent questions if required. The survey was conducted during an eight week period.

The use of international tourists was justified as a substitute for FIFA decision-makers because arguably FIFA inspectors can be considered tourists or visitors themselves. Getz (1998) for example categorizes athletes, officials, spectators and the media as visitors. Westerbeek et al. (2002) who classify visitors as business and non-business visitors, suggest that business visitors include those individuals who travel to a destination to buy or sell goods and services, inspect sites or attend meetings and conventions, whereas non-business visitors comprise tourists (including those attending the event), teams competing in the event as well as organizing committees (ibid).

### **Questionnaire**

The first three sections of the questionnaire measured country image perceptions. It included two cognitive components of country image and a personality component.

Cognitive evaluations of country image related to Morocco's physical attributes were measured with 20 items drawn from the scale developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). Respondents were asked to rate statements regarding the quality of various Moroccan attributes (such as perceived quality of transport, infrastructure and accommodation) on a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*). Scale reliability was good with a cronbach alpha of 0.82.

Cognitive evaluations of country image related to political, economic and technology dimensions were measured using the 14 item scale developed by Martin and Eroglu (1993). Respondents were asked to rate their overall image of Morocco on a 7 point semantic differential rating scale with bipolar adjectives at each end (for example economically developed – economically underdeveloped, democratic system – dictatorial system). Scale reliability was good with a cronbach alpha of 0.76.

Personality evaluations of country image were measured using items drawn from the scale developed by d'Astous and Boujbel (2007). The scale comprised six personality dimensions (agreeableness, wickedness, snobbism, assiduousness, conformity and unobtrusiveness) with each of the dimensions being composed of four items, resulting in 24 personality traits. Respondents were asked to rate how well they believed each personality trait described Morocco on a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 *Not at all* to 5 *very much*). Scale reliability was good with a cronbach alpha of 0.78.

The fourth section of the questionnaire contained one question that asked respondents to evaluate Morocco as a travel destination on a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 *very poor* to 5 *excellent*) and one question that asked respondents whether they would recommend Morocco as a destination to host the 2022 World Cup.

A number of other questions related to respondent perceptions of factors likely to act against Morocco being chosen as a destination for the World Cup were also included in the questionnaire but not analyzed for this study.

The last section of the questionnaire contained standard socioeconomic and demographic questions (gender, age, occupation, education and income) in addition to one question that asked respondents to indicate their country of origin.

Prior to use in the main study, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a sample of 30 international students and faculty from Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco. As a result, one minor structural modification was made to the questionnaire.

### ***The Models***

Logistic regression was used to test for a potential relationship between the evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination (dependent variable Y) and Morocco's perceived cognitive dimensions of country image (physical construct and political, economic and technological construct) and perceived personality dimension of country image.

The use of Morocco as a travel destination for the dependent variable was justified on the basis that tourists even with an awareness of the world cup and FIFA would not be familiar enough with FIFA's expectations of a host country to make an informed judgment about country image related to evaluation of Morocco as a destination for the world cup, but could make an informed decision in relation to Morocco as a travel destination. Further it is plausible that country image as an intangible supporting element of the bid evaluation (Westerbeek et al., 2002) would be also conceptualized by the FIFA Executive Committee in this light. Florek et al. (2007) for example suggest that mega event audiences are influenced most by intangible factors such as friendly people, multi-cultural atmosphere and safety when forming host destination perceptions. Chalip and McGuirly (2004) found that the probability of attending an event increased if additional non-event attractions were available at the host destination. Additionally Hinch and Higham (2001) suggest that whilst a "specific sporting event may function as the primary attraction in a destination" it is the availability of attractions in the surrounding area that finalizes the decision to travel; thus "mega-event attendants need to first be understood from a sport and tourism perspective". Given FIFA usually receives a portion of the financial benefit of hosting the event they have a vested interest in maximizing attendance at the tournament (Maenning and Du Plessis, 2007). Thus it seems highly likely that the FIFA Executive Committee when evaluating the intangible aspects of a bid would base their evaluation on perceptions of the host country as a travel destination. Expressed in odds ratio the following models were analyzed:

### ***Cognitive Dimensions***

The evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination (dependent variable Y) and Morocco's perceived image related to physical attributes:  $Y = \epsilon_i + \beta_1(\text{variety of activities}) + \beta_2(\text{landscape}) + \beta_3(\text{beach and water resources}) + \beta_4(\text{nature}) + \beta_5(\text{cultural attractions}) + \beta_6(\text{nightlife}) + \beta_7(\text{shopping facilities}) + \beta_8(\text{sport facilities}) + \beta_9(\text{gastronomy}) + \beta_{10}(\text{value for money}) + \beta_{11}(\text{climate}) + \beta_{12}(\text{rest \& relaxation}) + \beta_{13}(\text{safety}) + \beta_{14}(\text{social interaction}) + \beta_{15}(\text{hospitality}) + \beta_{16}(\text{originality of the destination}) + \beta_{17}(\text{service quality}) + \beta_{18}(\text{hygiene and cleanliness}) + \beta_{19}(\text{transportation}) + \beta_{20}(\text{accommodation})$ .

The evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination (dependent variable Y) and Morocco's perceived political, economic and technological image:  $Y = \epsilon_i + \beta_1(\text{economically developed} - \text{economically underdeveloped}) + \beta_2(\text{democratic system} - \text{dictatorial system}) + \beta_3(\text{mass produced products} - \text{handcrafted products}) + \beta_4(\text{civilian government} - \text{military government}) + \beta_5(\text{predominantly industrialized} - \text{predominantly non-industrialized}) + \beta_6(\text{high labor cost} - \text{low labor cost}) + \beta_7(\text{high literacy rate} - \text{low literacy rate}) + \beta_8(\text{free market system} - \text{centrally planned system}) + \beta_9(\text{existence of a welfare system} - \text{lack of a welfare system}) + \beta_{10}(\text{stable economic environment} - \text{unstable economic environment}) + \beta_{11}(\text{exporter of agricultural products} - \text{importer of agricultural products}) + \beta_{12}(\text{producer of high quality products} - \text{producer of low quality products}) + \beta_{13}(\text{low standard of living} - \text{high standard of living}) + \beta_{14}(\text{high level of technological research} - \text{low level of technological research})$ .

### ***Personality Dimensions***

The evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination (dependent variable Y) and Morocco's perceived personality:  $Y = \epsilon_i + \beta_1(\text{bon vivant}) + \beta_2(\text{reveler}) + \beta_3(\text{amusing}) + \beta_4(\text{agreeable}) + \beta_5(\text{vulgar}) + \beta_6(\text{immoral}) + \beta_7(\text{decadent}) + \beta_8(\text{offender}) + \beta_9(\text{haughty}) + \beta_{10}(\text{snobbish}) + \beta_{11}(\text{mannered}) + \beta_{12}(\text{chauvinist}) + \beta_{13}(\text{organized}) + \beta_{14}(\text{rigorous}) + \beta_{15}(\text{flourishing}) + \beta_{16}(\text{hard at work}) + \beta_{17}(\text{religious}) + \beta_{18}(\text{spiritual}) + \beta_{19}(\text{traditionalist}) + \beta_{20}(\text{mysterious}) + \beta_{21}(\text{cowardly}) + \beta_{22}(\text{wimpy}) + \beta_{23}(\text{dependent}) + \beta_{24}(\text{neutral})$ .

## **Results**

### ***Sample Demographics***

The 150 distributed questionnaires resulted in a sample of 127 (a response rate of 85%), of which 56% were male and 44% were female.

With respect to age 3% of respondents were aged under 20 years, 46% of respondents were aged between 21 and 30 years, 22% were aged between 31 and 40 years, 12% were aged between 41 and 50 years and the remaining 17% were aged over 51 years. Reflecting the age of the sample, 48% of respondents were single, 44% were married and 8% divorced or widowed. Further over half of the sample (65%) indicated that they lived on their own or with one other household member. The remaining respondents indicated they lived with between 2 and 4 other household members (33%) or more than 5 other household members (2%).

With respect to educational background, the sample appears upwardly skewed with 80% of the sample having either a bachelor (37%) or master (43%) degree. However, nearly three quarters (74%) of respondents indicated that they currently earned between 500 and 3000 euros a month, with 15% indicating they earned over 3000 euros a month and 11% under 500 euros a month.

With respect to country of origin 96% of the respondents indicated that they were from Europe, 2% from the United States of America with the remaining respondents from a variety of other countries. According to the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism (2011) of the over 8 million international tourists who visited Morocco in 2009, the majority came from Europe (83%), with the remaining coming from the United Kingdom (3%) or other countries (14%). Thus it would appear that by and large the sample is fairly representative of international visitors to Morocco.

Arguably FIFA decision makers might be older more educated and have greater income than tourists from our sample. However Dagger and Raciti (2011) who examined the impact of demographic data on country image, product category and willingness to buy found no significant differences in perceptions across age, gender, marital status and income levels. For this study ANOVA tests confirmed that age, gender, marital status, income levels and education have no impact on the evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination nor on the evaluation of Morocco as a FIFA destination. Statistically perception is not linked to an individual socio-economic background and consequently FIFA official's country evaluation would not differ greatly from the evaluation of our sample.

### ***Morocco as a Destination to Host the World Cup***

Regarding evaluation of Morocco as a world cup destination 90.98% of the 122 respondents indicated they would recommend Morocco as a host for the 2022 world cup.

As can be seen in Table 1, cross tabulations show that respondents who support Morocco as a world cup destination also tend to rate Morocco as a good travel destination. This finding also seems to add weight to the argument used earlier in the paper that Morocco as a travel destination is an appropriate dependent variable.

**Table 1.** Cross tabulation for the ‘How would you rate Morocco as a travel destination’ and ‘Would you recommend Morocco to host the World Cup in 2022?’

Morocco as a travel destination	Recommend Morocco to host the 2022 world cup		
	No	Yes	Total
Very poor	0	2	2
Poor	1	2	3
Good	6	35	41
Very good	2	54	56
Excellent	2	18	20
Total	11	111	122

### **Country Evaluation Based on Cognitive Dimensions**

#### *Physical Attributes*

Data were analyzed using logistic regression. A p value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Table 2 shows the relationship between respondents evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination and the country’s perceived physical attributes. Overall the model was found to be statistically significant (p value <0.05), indicating that a least one of the attributes correlated to the evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination. Specifically, results indicate that cultural attractions, sports facilities and relaxation contribute positively to the evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination, whereas shopping facilities contribute negatively. More precisely, a one unit standard deviation increase in the importance of cultural attractions, sporting facilities or relaxation for the respondent increases the rating of Morocco as a travel destination by 94.5%, 91.5% and 75.9% respectively, holding other variables constant. Conversely a one unit increase in the

importance of shopping for the respondent decreases the rating of Morocco as a travel destination by 43.7%.

**Table 2.** Morocco's Perceived Country Image based on Physical Attributes (n = 120).

Physical Attributes	b	P> z	%
Landscape	0.58913	0.146	80.2
Beaches	-0.14188	0.576	-13.2
Nature	0.08087	0.833	8.4
Cultural attractions	0.66534	0.024	94.5
Nightlife	-0.31525	0.231	-27
Shopping facilities	-0.5748	0.014	-43.7
Sport facilities	0.64948	0.034	91.5
Gastronomy	0.01417	0.957	1.4
Price	-0.15649	0.493	-14.5
Climate	0.15598	0.538	16.9
Relaxation	0.56454	0.057	75.9
Security	0.07563	0.788	7.9
Social interaction	0.20329	0.406	22.5
Hospitality	0.16271	0.647	17.7
Originality of destination	-0.39628	0.196	-32.7
Quality	-0.24592	0.393	-21.8
Transportation	0.05153	0.848	5.3
Hygiene/ Cleanliness	-0.43047	0.11	-35
Accommodation	0.4149	0.238	51.4

**Political, Economic and Technological Image**

Data were analyzed using both descriptive statistics and logistic regression. A p value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for respondents evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination and the country's perceived country image based on political, economic and technical attributes. Interestingly respondents ranked each of the bipolar

adjectives on the 7 point semantic differential scale near the mid-point; with the lowest rating being 3.5 out of 7 and the highest 4.8 out of 7. Thus for example, Morocco is not perceived as being under-developed nor is it perceived as being developed, it is not perceived as a democratic society nor is it perceived as a dictatorship. Regression analysis confirmed more definitively that evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination has no relationship of significance with political, economic and technical aspects of country image.

**Table 3.** Morocco's Perceived Country Image based on Political, Economic and Technical Attributes (n=123).

<b>Political, Economic and Technical Attributes</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>
Economically developed	4.322581	0.1119343
Democratic system	4.072581	0.1179939
Mass produced products	4.814516	0.1240579
Civilian government	3.903226	0.1224902
Predominantly industrialized	4.475806	0.1230479
Labourcosts	4.782258	0.1400426
Literacy rate	4.129032	0.1335271
Free market system	3.548387	0.1202949
Existence of a welfare system	4.266129	0.1497917
Stable economic environment	3.887097	0.11912
Exporter of agricultural products	3.435484	0.1341513
Production of high quality products	3.943548	0.1202663
Standard of living	4.572581	0.1270896
Level of technological research	4.524194	0.1282657



### **Country Evaluation Based on Personality Traits**

Data were analyzed using logistic regression. A p value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant, with the exception of the personality trait 'agreeable', which was included with a p value of 0.1.

Table 4 shows the relationship between respondent evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination and Morocco's perceived personality. Results indicate that the personality traits agreeable, offender, mannered and flourishing contribute positively to the evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination, whereas the personality traits haughty, mysterious and wimpy contribute negatively. More precisely a one unit increase in the perception that Morocco is agreeable, an offender, mannered, flourishing or increases the rating of Morocco as a travel destination by 82.9%, 132.9%, 156.6% and 111.3% respectively, holding other variables constant. Conversely, a one unit increase in the perception of Morocco as being haughty, mysterious or wimpy decreases the rating of Morocco as a travel destination by 71.6%, 50.7% and 46.7% respectively.

**Table 4.** Morocco's Perceived Country Personality (n=110).

<b>Personality</b>			
<b>Trait</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>P&gt; z </b>	<b>%</b>
Bon vivant	0.05946	0.851	6.1
Reveler	-0.42224	0.168	-34.4
Amusing	0.52991	0.152	69.9
Agreeable	0.60385	0.071	82.9
Vulgar	-0.14517	0.593	-13.5
Immoral	-0.31105	0.457	-26.7
Decadent	-0.07573	0.868	-7.3
Offender	0.84565	0.037	132.9
Haughty	-1.25986	0.01	-71.6
Snobbish	0.06019	0.89	6.2
Mannered	0.94242	0.001	156.6
Chauvinist	-0.09725	0.705	-9.3
Organized	0.34837	0.263	41.7
Rigorous	-0.21836	0.529	-19.6
Flourishing	0.74805	0.024	111.3
Hard at Work	-0.1225	0.649	-11.5
Religious	-0.20639	0.649	-18.6

Spiritual	0.65407	0.082	92.3
Traditional	0.13987	0.724	15
Mysterious	-0.70778	0.023	-50.7
Cowardly	-0.63014	0.035	-46.7
Wimpy	0.14275	0.694	15.3
Dependent			
Neutral	-0.51877	0.082	-40.5
	0.17726	0.474	19.4

### Discussion and Conclusion

#### *Discussion and Implications (a)*

The results suggest that Morocco's cultural attractions, sporting facilities and relaxation opportunities have a significant positive impact on evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination. As such these factors should be promoted by any future host bid committee in its communications with the FIFA Executive Committee.

It is interesting to note that respondents did not perceive security to be a significant issue in relation to Morocco being chosen as a travel destination. On the one hand, this seems to contradict the notion that a key concern of many Europeans and Westerners when traveling in parts of the Arab world is safety (Covington, 2002). On the other hand, this result does seem to support the fact that many western countries (see for example the American State Department, which alerts U.S. citizens to dangers abroad) have listed Morocco as a safe destination for many years (ibid).

The results also suggest that Morocco's current shopping facilities impact negatively on evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination. Interestingly just prior to this present study the Moroccan government in recognition of the lack of large-scale shopping facilities and in an effort to encourage and support tourism, launched the Rawaj plan. This initiative aims to treble large-scale retail capacity by 2020. Some 56 large-scale retail outlets are due to open by 2012 alone, with the aim to have 600 such facilities by 2020 (OECD, 2010; Maghreb Arabe Presse, 2011). Thus any future bid should emphasize the fact that shoppers in Morocco look set to benefit from much greater shopping choice.

#### *Discussion and Implications (b)*

The results suggest that Morocco does not have a strong country image with respect to political, economic and technical attributes. Arguably this reflects the nature of

Morocco's political, economic and social reforms during the last two decades. Beginning with political reforms in the 1990s, reforms have expanded into economic and social fields (Sater, 2007; Willis, 2009). However whilst many Moroccan authorities wish to project a moderate and progressive image in Western countries, resistance to aspects of these reforms, from those that wish to preserve the political powers of the monarchy and also from elements within Moroccan society anxious about fundamental changes to national and cultural identity, have resulted in much rhetoric but little tangible, on the ground progress (Willis, 2009; Kausch, 2009). The 1996 Constitution for example defines Morocco as a 'democratic, social and constitutional monarchy'. However, the King's characterization of Morocco as an 'executive monarchy' is seen to describe the actual distribution of powers more accurately (Kausch, 2009). Plausibly inconsistent messages such as this may account for an indecisive political, economic and technical country image.

Given the ambivalence towards Morocco's political, economic and technological environment, any future host bid committee in its communications with the FIFA Executive Committee should provide extensive economic development data (including statistics on literacy rates and standard of living), evidence of Morocco's political stability and evidence of Morocco's level of technological research.

#### *Discussion and Implications (c)*

Intriguingly the results show that the personality trait 'offender' has a positive impact on the evaluation of Morocco. Arguably this could be linked to the high degree of perceived regulatory freedom in the country. For example, Moroccan souks are well known amongst European tourists for carrying a wide selection of counterfeit goods including fake labels such as Chanel, Fendi and Louis Vuitton (Notofakes, 2010). Road traffic regulations are also seldom implemented and although Morocco is a Muslim country, alcohol is widely available (Haggins, 2000).

Based on the results the perceived personality traits of agreeable, mannered, offender and flourishing are those that should be highlighted by any future host bid committee in its communications with the FIFA Executive Committee. Conversely any concern that Morocco is haughty, mysterious or fearful should be allayed.

***Bridging the Perception Gap between the Bidding Committee and FIFA***

A close look at the 2010 Moroccan bid suggests that the bidding committee had little understanding of FIFA's likely perceptions about Morocco as a host country. The Moroccan bid was strong. It was judged financially sound and profitable by FIFA (M. Zeghari, member of the organizing committee for the Morocco 2010 bid, personal communication, 11 October 2010). Morocco also fared well in the crucial on-site assessment of infrastructure to host the event. Yet ultimately FIFA's vote went to South Africa, a country perceived by many as less football orientated. So why was FIFA unconvinced by the Moroccan bid? As argued in this paper, Morocco and South Africa were on an even par in relation to tangible success factors for winning the bid. Thus the decision over which of the two countries would gain the right to host the event would have been based largely upon competitive advantage in relation to intangible bid success factors such as country image. Simply put South Africa was able to present a more positive country image than Morocco; South Africa was for example able to project itself as the leader of the African continent (Cornelissen, 2004).

Morocco spent between 12 and 20 million USD on the bidding process. It also enlisted the assistance of global consulting firm McKinsey in preparation of the bid book. The bid emphasized Morocco's close links with Europe and used the underlying theme of "The new Morocco"; modern, open and forward looking. The results of this study show that this image is at odds with the perception of visitors to Morocco and plausibly any visiting FIFA inspection team. The perception of Morocco's political, economic and technological environment is at best ambiguous. This suggests the bidding committee needed to reposition Morocco in the minds of the FIFA Executive Committee by providing extensive social and economic development data together with evidence of Morocco's political stability and technological development. Finally the bidding committee would have benefited from heavily promoting the physical and personality factors perceived as having a significant positive impact on evaluation of Morocco as a travel destination including Morocco's cultural attractions, sporting facilities and relaxation opportunities as well as Morocco's perceived personality traits of agreeable, offener, mannered and flourishing.

Due to the sheer popularity of the World Cup, FIFA's choice of host country has immense political and financial impact on the chosen nation. In making its choice, FIFA as do most organizations when making important decisions weighs both rational and emotional considerations. Thus one clearly needs to address both to win its favors.

Country image analysis provides a useful tool upon which to understand and secure a successful host country FIFA bid.

### ***Limitations and Future Research***

The findings provide a strong foundation for any future world cup bidding committee to promote or reposition perceptual aspects of Morocco's country image. Findings also suggest that country image is a useful framework for advancing understanding of securing successful sporting bids. There are however a number of limitations to this research.

A key limitation is the study's reliance on the use of international tourists to Morocco as a substitute for FIFA decision-makers. Whilst on the one hand (as argued) FIFA inspectors can be considered as tourists or visitors themselves (Getz, 1998; Westerbeek et al., 2002), on the other hand international tourists may not be familiar enough with FIFA's expectations of a host country to make an informed judgment. This limitation was somewhat offset by the screening of respondents to ensure that they were aware of the world cup and FIFA. Whilst a direct study of FIFA decision makers is not practical, it would be desirable for future research to incorporate additional screening questions to gauge the depth of respondent understanding with respect to FIFA's expectations of a host country.

Another limitation is the sample size and the representative bias associated with use of a convenience sample. To improve validity it would be desirable for future research to include a larger number of respondents from tourist destinations throughout Morocco.

None the less the results provide a useful framework for development of any future Moroccan World Cup bid and for further studies in the area of Morocco's country image.

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