

Global kickoff: An empirical assessment of the international business opportunities created by Morocco's joint hosting of the 2030 FIFA World Cup

Basiru Usman^{*1} and Ilyas El Mengad²

¹IT, Analytics and Operations Department, North Carolina State University, USA

²Skema Business School, France

Email: ilyas.elmengad@skema.edu²

*Correspondence: busman@ncsu.edu

Abstract

This study investigates the international business opportunities expected to emerge from Morocco's role as a joint host of the 2030 FIFA World Cup alongside Spain and Portugal. Mega sporting events have increasingly been recognized as platforms capable of reshaping the economic trajectory of host nations, particularly by attracting foreign direct investment, expanding tourism demand, and accelerating infrastructure modernization. Yet the extent to which these benefits materialize for emerging economies remains contested, and empirical evidence on stakeholder expectations in the North African context is limited. To address this gap, the study adopts a quantitative research design built around a structured survey of 57 respondents drawn from students, young professionals, and individuals engaged with international business and sport. The findings reveal a strongly optimistic outlook: respondents anticipate meaningful gains in foreign direct investment, infrastructure development, tourism expansion, and Morocco's global reputation, while also assigning high importance to environmental sustainability and inclusive growth for small and medium enterprises. At the same time, respondents' emphasis on governance, cost management, and long term planning signals an awareness that these benefits are not automatic. By grounding perceptual data in the broader mega event literature, the study offers an evidence based contribution to debates on how developing economies can convert global sporting spectacles into durable competitive advantage, and it provides practical guidance for policymakers and investors preparing for 2030.

Keywords: FIFA World Cup 2030, International Business, Morocco, Foreign Direct Investment, Tourism Development, Mega Events, Sustainable Development, Emerging Markets

JEL Classification: F21, F63, L83

1. Introduction

Mega sporting events have travelled a long way from being purely athletic spectacles to becoming instruments of national economic strategy. The FIFA World Cup, in particular, has evolved into one of the most closely watched vehicles through which host nations seek to attract capital, modernize infrastructure, and project a renewed image to global audiences. For emerging economies, the stakes attached to hosting are especially high. Success can accelerate integration into global value chains and unlock foreign investment that might otherwise take decades to materialize, while missteps can leave behind costly and underused infrastructure. Understanding how such events are perceived, and where their opportunities are believed to lie, is therefore a matter of considerable practical and academic interest. Morocco's selection, together with Spain and Portugal, to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup places the country at a rare intersection of visibility and opportunity. Positioned geographically as a bridge between Africa and Europe, Morocco enters this tournament already engaged in an ambitious national development agenda, including the Vision 2030 tourism strategy and sustained investment in transport and energy infrastructure. The World Cup offers a platform to accelerate these existing priorities, showcasing the country's economic potential, its improving business environment, and its capacity to deliver large scale international events to a global audience of investors, tourists, and trading partners.

Yet the literature on mega events cautions against assuming that hosting automatically translates into lasting economic benefit. Short term gains in tourist arrivals and construction activity are well documented, but whether these gains persist, and whether they are distributed broadly across the economy rather than concentrated among a narrow set of beneficiaries, depends heavily on governance quality, strategic planning, and the ability of policymakers to embed event related investment into broader development frameworks. High profile infrastructure, if poorly matched to demand once the event has concluded, risks becoming an underused liability rather than a productive asset. These tensions make it essential to examine not only the opportunities that a joint hosting arrangement might create, but also the conditions under which those opportunities are more or less likely to be realized. This study responds to that need by examining the international business opportunities that Morocco may derive from joint hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup, with particular attention to tourism development, infrastructure expansion, foreign direct investment, international trade relations, and sustainability. Rather than relying solely on macroeconomic projections, the study captures how the event is perceived by individuals engaged with international business and sport, offering an early empirical window into expectations that will shape investment and policy decisions in the years leading up to 2030. Specifically, the study pursues three objectives. The first is to assess awareness and overall sentiment toward Morocco's joint hosting role. The second is to identify which economic sectors are expected to benefit most, and how respondents weigh opportunities against risks such as cost overruns and sustainability concerns. The third is to draw out the strategic priorities that respondents believe should guide Morocco's preparation for the tournament. To achieve these objectives, the study adopts a

quantitative research approach centered on a structured survey administered to 57 respondents. The analysis relies on descriptive statistics to characterize perceptions of the anticipated economic and business impacts of the World Cup, providing an empirical complement to the largely qualitative and case study literature on previous host nations.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. Section two reviews the literature on mega events and international business, situating Morocco's joint hosting role within existing theoretical and empirical work. Section three describes the methodology, including the research design, sample, instrument, and analytical approach. Section four presents the results and discusses them in relation to the wider literature. Section five concludes with a synthesis of findings, their implications for policymakers and investors, and directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

Mega sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games have attracted sustained scholarly attention because of their capacity to generate significant economic, infrastructural, and social transformation. Although these events are, by definition, short lived, their consequences for host countries and host cities often unfold over decades (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006). Beyond their sporting significance, mega events function as strategic platforms for economic diversification, investment attraction, and urban modernization (Preuss, 2019). The literature on mega events can broadly be grouped into three strands. The first consists of economic impact studies that examine outcomes such as gross domestic product growth, employment, and foreign investment. The second comprises social and urban development studies that focus on infrastructure expansion and community transformation. The third includes legacy and sustainability studies that evaluate the durability of benefits once the event has concluded. Across all three strands, a consistent theme emerges: mega events are associated with substantial potential benefits, but the realization of those benefits depends heavily on effective policy planning, governance structures, and private sector participation (Baade & Matheson, 2016; Solberg & Preuss, 2007). Within this body of work, Morocco's joint hosting of the 2030 FIFA World Cup with Spain and Portugal offers a particularly instructive case. The arrangement pairs an emerging economy with two established European hosts, creating a natural setting in which to examine how mega event opportunities are perceived when a developing country participates alongside more mature markets. The event presents an opportunity to stimulate international business activity across several sectors, including tourism, infrastructure, trade, nation branding, and sustainability, each of which is examined below.

2.1 Tourism and Destination Development

Tourism is among the most extensively studied economic dimensions of mega events. Existing literature suggests that hosting international sporting events significantly enhances destination visibility, increases tourist arrivals, and stimulates growth in the hospitality sector (Fourie & Santana Gallego, 2011). The 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, for example, attracted

hundreds of thousands of international visitors and meaningfully increased tourism demand, although actual arrivals fell short of early projections (Peeters, Matheson, & Szymanski, 2014). Qatar likewise leveraged the 2022 FIFA World Cup to position itself as a long term tourism destination, with projections pointing to a thirty five percent increase in visitor numbers in the years following the event (Qatar Tourism, 2023). Mega events also function as powerful instruments of nation branding. Cornelissen and Swart (2010) argue that such events reshape a country's international image by associating it with modernity, openness, and hospitality, an outcome that aligns closely with Morocco's strategic ambition to be seen as a culturally rich and globally connected destination bridging Africa and Europe. Tourism already contributes approximately seven percent of Morocco's gross domestic product and supports a substantial share of national employment (World Bank, 2024), and the country's Vision 2030 strategy targets twenty six million tourists annually, a goal that World Cup exposure could plausibly help accelerate. Chalip and Costa (2006) emphasize the importance of leveraging strategies, whereby policymakers and businesses align marketing initiatives with the global media attention that accompanies a mega event in order to maximize long term tourism benefits. For Morocco, this may involve weaving coastal, cultural, and desert experiences into a single, coherent visitor narrative rather than treating the World Cup as an isolated promotional opportunity. Even so, several scholars caution against overestimating tourism benefits. Visitor numbers typically rise during mega events, but these gains are not always sustained once global attention moves elsewhere (Solberg & Preuss, 2007), and tourism benefits tend to concentrate in urban centers, which can widen regional disparities if legacy planning is neglected (Getz, 2012).

2.2 Infrastructure Development and Economic Growth

Infrastructure development represents another critical legacy associated with mega events. Hosting requires substantial investment in stadiums, transportation networks, airports, and public services, and Grix and Houlihan (2014) note that mega events provide both the political justification and the financial momentum for infrastructure projects that might otherwise face delay or resistance. These investments can raise national productivity, improve connectivity, and support sustained economic growth, provided they are integrated into broader development strategies rather than pursued as standalone, event specific projects. Where planning is weak, however, the same investments risk becoming underused facilities and lasting financial burdens once the tournament has ended.

2.3 Foreign Direct Investment and International Trade

A growing body of research treats mega events as signals that reduce information asymmetries between host countries and international investors. Rose and Spiegel (2011) find that countries hosting the Olympic Games experience a lasting increase in trade flows, an effect they attribute less to the event itself than to the broader liberalization and reform commitments that hosting tends to accompany. Applied to the FIFA World Cup, this logic suggests that Morocco's joint hosting

role could function as a credible signal of political stability, institutional readiness, and openness to trade, encouraging foreign investors to reassess the country's risk profile. Baade and Matheson (2016) add an important qualification, however, noting that the economic returns to hosting are frequently overstated in official projections and that realized foreign investment tends to depend far more on complementary reforms, such as regulatory simplification and investment facilitation mechanisms, than on the event itself.

2.4 Nation Branding, Soft Power, and Global Positioning

Beyond narrowly economic channels, mega events are widely understood as instruments of soft power. Grix and Lee (2013) argue that emerging states in particular use mega events to project an image of modernity and reliability that can influence diplomatic standing and international partnerships well beyond the tournament itself. Combined with the nation branding effects discussed by Cornelissen and Swart (2010) and the infrastructure focused political economy described by Grix and Houlihan (2014), this literature suggests that the value of hosting extends into reputational and diplomatic capital that is more difficult to quantify than tourist arrivals or investment flows, but potentially just as consequential for a country positioning itself as a bridge between two continents.

2.5 Sustainability and Governance in Mega Event Planning

A final and increasingly prominent strand of the literature examines the environmental and governance dimensions of mega event planning. Trendafilova, Babiak, and Heinze (2013) document a broader shift within professional sport toward environmental responsibility, driven partly by stakeholder expectations that large events minimize their ecological footprint through measures such as renewable energy use and waste management. At the same time, Mangan and Dyreson (2010) highlight the recurring risk of so called white elephant projects, in which stadiums and related infrastructure built for a mega event fail to find productive uses afterward, becoming symbols of poor governance rather than lasting legacy. Taken together, this literature suggests that sustainability and governance are not peripheral concerns but central determinants of whether a host country converts short term visibility into durable economic advantage. Taken as a whole, the literature reviewed above points to a clear conclusion: mega events create genuine opportunities across tourism, infrastructure, investment, trade, and international reputation, but the realization of these opportunities is conditional rather than automatic. What remains comparatively underexplored is how these opportunities are perceived in advance by stakeholders in an emerging economy that is joint hosting alongside more established markets, a gap that motivates the empirical approach adopted in this study.

3. Methodology

This study analyzes the international business opportunities that Morocco may derive from joint hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup. To achieve this objective, a quantitative research approach was

adopted, using a structured survey to collect data. Quantitative methods are widely used in studies examining the economic and business impacts of mega events because they enable the collection of measurable data and the identification of patterns in perceptions and expectations (Preuss, 2019; Creswell, 2014).

3.1 Research Design

The study employs a survey research design in which data are collected at a single point in time, an approach well suited to capturing respondents' perceptions of anticipated business opportunities associated with the 2030 FIFA World Cup. Surveys of this kind are commonly used in social science research to examine attitudes, opinions, and trends within a defined population (Bryman, 2016). The research focuses on the economic dimensions most frequently highlighted in the mega event literature, namely tourism development, infrastructure investment, foreign direct investment, international trade, and sustainability.

3.2 Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The target population consisted of individuals knowledgeable about international events or otherwise interested in global business and economic development. A nonprobability convenience sampling method was used, an approach commonly applied in exploratory research where access to a fully representative sampling frame is limited (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). The study initially targeted between thirty and fifty participants and ultimately obtained a final sample of 57 respondents, comprising university students, young professionals, and individuals with a demonstrated interest in international business and sport. Participation was restricted to individuals aged eighteen years and above who were able to understand and respond to the survey and who took part voluntarily; individuals under eighteen years of age and those who did not provide consent were excluded. While convenience sampling enabled efficient data collection within the constraints of the study, it also limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to the wider population, a limitation addressed further below.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

The primary data collection tool was an online questionnaire developed using Google Forms, consisting of structured multiple choice questions designed to assess respondents' perceptions of the economic and business impacts of the World Cup. Survey instruments of this kind are widely used in quantitative research because they allow standardized data to be collected efficiently across many respondents (Creswell, 2014). The questionnaire addressed several key themes, including awareness of Morocco's role as a joint host, expected impacts on tourism and infrastructure, perceived potential for foreign investment, and the importance respondents attach to sustainability initiatives. The survey was distributed online through social media platforms and academic networks, and participants received a brief description of the study before being invited to take part voluntarily. Completion required approximately two to three minutes. Ethical considerations

were addressed throughout the process: participation was entirely voluntary, responses were collected anonymously, and no personally identifying data were gathered, measures intended to protect confidentiality and to satisfy standard research ethics guidelines.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including frequencies, percentages, and graphical representations. Google Forms automatically generated summary statistics and visual charts, which facilitated interpretation. Descriptive statistics of this kind are appropriate for exploratory studies aiming to identify trends and patterns in respondents' perceptions (Field, 2013), and the results are presented below using tables and charts that illustrate how participants view the potential impact of the World Cup on key sectors such as tourism, investment, and infrastructure.

3.5 Reliability, Validity, and Limitations

To strengthen the validity of the study, the questionnaire was designed around themes already established in the mega event and international business literature, helping to ensure that the instrument measured constructs relevant to the research questions. Formal reliability testing, such as the computation of Cronbach's alpha, was not conducted given the exploratory nature of the study, although the use of standardized, literature grounded questions supports a reasonable degree of internal consistency. The methodology nonetheless carries several limitations that should inform how the findings are interpreted. The relatively small sample of 57 respondents constrains the generalizability of the results, and the use of convenience sampling may introduce selection bias, since participants may not fully represent the broader population or key institutional stakeholders such as policymakers and investors. In addition, the study captures perceptions rather than realized economic outcomes, an unavoidable consequence of studying an event that has not yet taken place, and its single point in time design does not capture how perceptions might evolve as the tournament approaches. These limitations suggest that the findings should be treated as an early, indicative signal of stakeholder sentiment rather than a definitive measure of the World Cup's eventual economic impact, and they point toward clear directions for future research discussed in the concluding section.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Respondent Profile

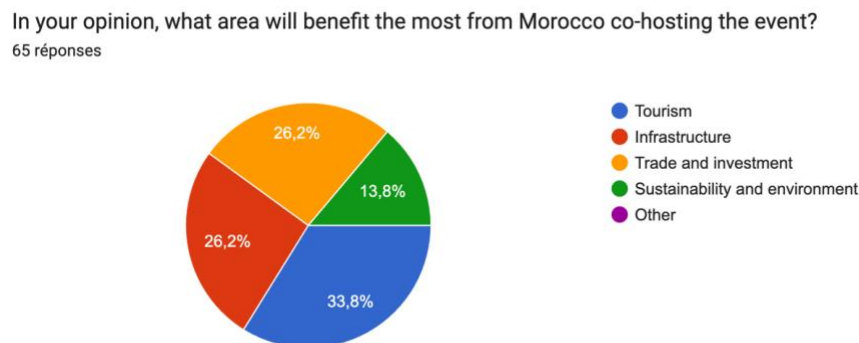
The study is based on a total of 57 respondents who voluntarily participated in the survey. Overall, respondents demonstrated a relatively high level of awareness regarding Morocco's role as a joint host of the 2030 FIFA World Cup: a majority (58 percent) reported being familiar with the event, while a further 21 percent indicated moderate familiarity, leaving only a small proportion with limited or no awareness. Respondents also expressed a strongly positive attitude toward Morocco hosting the tournament, with 53 percent reporting a very positive perception and 42 percent a

somewhat positive perception. Negative perceptions were negligible, pointing to strong overall optimism toward the event even at this relatively early stage of preparation.

4.2 Perceived Key Business Opportunities

Respondents were asked to identify the sector most likely to benefit from Morocco's joint hosting of the World Cup. As illustrated in Figure 1, tourism emerged as the most frequently selected sector at 29.8 percent, followed closely by trade and foreign investment at 28.1 percent and infrastructure at 26.3 percent. Sustainability and environmental sectors were also identified, though by a smaller share of respondents at 15.8 percent. These results indicate that respondents perceive the economic impact of the World Cup as multidimensional rather than concentrated in a single sector, a pattern that closely mirrors the diversified benefits documented in the broader mega event literature (Fourie & Santana Gallego, 2011; Preuss, 2019).

Figure 1. Sector expected to benefit most from the 2030 FIFA World Cup

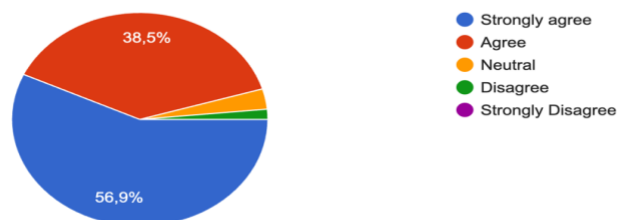


4.3 Perception of Foreign Direct Investment

Respondents were also asked to evaluate whether the World Cup would attract foreign investment to Morocco. As shown in Figure 2, a strong majority expressed positive expectations, with 59.6

Figure 2. Perception of foreign direct investment attraction

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The 2030 FIFA World Cup will attract significant foreign investment to Morocco."
65 réponses



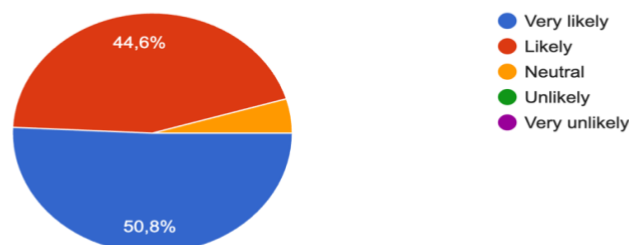
percent strongly agreeing and 35.1 percent agreeing that the event would significantly increase foreign investment, while only a very small proportion expressed neutral or negative views. This near consensus suggests a high level of confidence in the World Cup as a catalyst for attracting international capital, consistent with the signaling mechanism described by Rose and Spiegel (2011), although the literature is equally clear that realizing this potential will depend on the complementary reforms and investment facilitation measures emphasized by Baade and Matheson (2016).

4.4 Expected Impact on Small and Medium Enterprises

The survey also examined perceptions of the event's impact on small and medium enterprises. As illustrated in Figure 3, nearly all respondents believed such enterprises would benefit, with 49.1 percent indicating that benefits were very likely and 47.4 percent considering them likely; no respondents selected a negative response. This finding is notable because much of the existing literature on mega events emphasizes macroeconomic and large investor outcomes while paying comparatively little attention to local enterprise participation. The strength of these results suggests that respondents view the World Cup as an opportunity not only for large scale international investment but also for local entrepreneurship in areas such as tourism services, retail, and logistics.

Figure 3. Perceived impact on small and medium enterprises

How likely do you think Moroccan small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are to benefit from the event (e.g., through tourism, trade, or services)?
65 réponses



4.5 Infrastructure Legacy

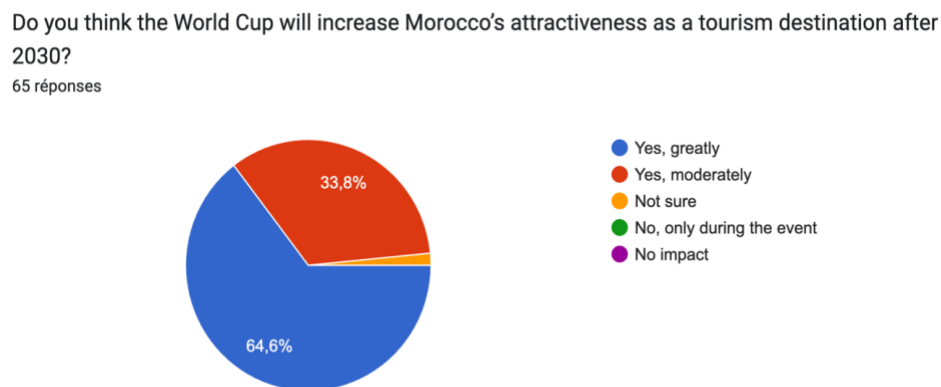
Respondents were asked whether infrastructure developed for the World Cup would continue to benefit Morocco after the tournament. The results point to strong optimism regarding long term infrastructure benefits, with 52.6 percent of respondents indicating that benefits would continue somewhat and 45.6 percent believing they would continue significantly; only 1.8 percent expressed uncertainty. This optimism stands in some contrast to critical perspectives in the literature that highlight the recurring risk of underused, white elephant infrastructure following mega events (Mangan & Dyreson, 2010), and it may reflect confidence that Morocco's current

development strategy, which integrates infrastructure expansion with broader economic and logistical objectives, will help the country avoid that outcome.

4.6 Tourism Impact Beyond 2030

The perceived long term impact on tourism was assessed as well. As shown in Figure 4, the majority of respondents (64.9 percent) believe the World Cup will greatly enhance Morocco's tourism sector beyond 2030, while 33.1 percent expect a moderate impact, and very few expressed uncertainty. This reinforces the view of the event as a long term tourism driver rather than a temporary spike in visitor numbers, aligning with the leveraging strategies described by Chalip and Costa (2006) and reinforcing the importance, given tourism's existing weight in Morocco's economy, of translating this anticipated visibility into lasting multiplier effects across related sectors.

Figure 4. Perceived long term tourism impact

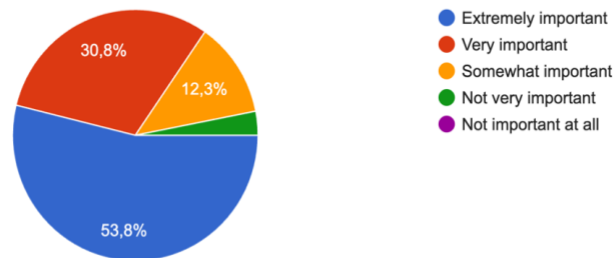


4.7 Importance of Sustainability

Respondents were also asked to evaluate the importance of sustainability in organizing the World Cup. As illustrated in Figure 5, sustainability was considered highly important overall, with 50.9 percent of respondents rating it extremely important and 35.1 percent rating it very important; only a small minority assigned it lower importance. These results reflect a growing awareness of environmental considerations in mega event planning and echo the shift toward corporate and event level environmental responsibility documented by Trendafilova, Babiak, and Heinze (2013). For Morocco, this presents a clear opportunity to align World Cup preparations with its broader renewable energy and sustainability commitments rather than treating environmental measures as an afterthought.

Figure 5. Importance of sustainability

How important is it for Morocco to ensure the 2030 FIFA World Cup is environmentally sustainable (e.g., green stadiums, renewable energy, waste management)?
65 réponses



4.8 Global Reputation and Partnerships

Respondents strongly believe the World Cup will enhance Morocco's global reputation, with 54.4 percent rating this outcome as very likely and 43.9 percent as likely, and only a minimal share remaining neutral. This finding resonates with the soft power framing advanced by Grix and Lee (2013), suggesting that respondents view the tournament as a vehicle for strengthening Morocco's international image and partnerships, an effect that the joint hosting arrangement with Spain and Portugal may further reinforce by positioning Morocco within a transcontinental collaboration.

4.9 Strategic Priorities

Finally, respondents identified the priority they considered most important for maximizing the benefits of the World Cup. Attracting foreign investors was the most frequently selected priority at 40.4 percent, followed by sustainable infrastructure at 24.6 percent, while tourism promotion and support for local businesses were each selected by 17.5 percent of respondents. These results suggest that respondents view the World Cup primarily as a strategic economic opportunity to be actively managed, rather than as a self-executing tourism event, reinforcing the importance of embedding the tournament within a broader national development framework rather than treating it as an isolated occasion.

4.10 Synthesis and Discussion

Taken together, these findings reveal several important trends, most notably a strong overall optimism toward the event and its expected contributions to tourism, foreign investment, infrastructure development, sustainability, and international positioning. These results are broadly consistent with the existing literature, which identifies mega events as catalysts for economic visibility, investment attraction, and urban development, while also emphasizing the importance of strategic planning for long term success (Preuss, 2019). One of the most striking findings is the overwhelmingly positive perception of the World Cup as an economic opportunity for Morocco,

with minimal negative or neutral responses across nearly every survey item. This suggests that the event is perceived not merely as a sporting occasion but as a strategic national development tool, consistent with the literature on mega events as instruments of economic repositioning and nation branding (Cornelissen & Swart, 2010; Grix & Lee, 2013). In Morocco's case, this perception reinforces the country's strategic ambition to position itself as a bridge between Africa and Europe. The distribution of expected benefits across sectors offers a second key insight. Respondents identified tourism, foreign investment, and infrastructure as the primary beneficiaries in relatively balanced proportions, supporting existing research indicating that mega events generate multidimensional economic impacts rather than benefits concentrated in a single sector (Fourie & Santana Gallego, 2011; Preuss, 2019). The prominence of tourism in particular is consistent with prior studies showing that major sporting events enhance destination visibility and stimulate hospitality industries well beyond the event itself.

The strong expectation that the World Cup will attract foreign direct investment reinforces the theoretical argument that mega events function as signals of economic opportunity and political stability. This finding aligns with Rose and Spiegel (2011), who show that hosting major events can increase trade openness and foster international economic relationships, although the literature is equally clear that such outcomes depend on institutional quality, governance, and investment facilitation mechanisms (Baade & Matheson, 2016). Respondent optimism, in other words, identifies a genuine opportunity, but its realization remains conditional on policy execution rather than guaranteed by the event alone. The results concerning small and medium enterprises make a particularly valuable contribution, since much of the existing literature concentrates on macroeconomic impacts and often overlooks the role of local businesses. The near unanimous belief that such enterprises will benefit suggests that respondents expect the World Cup to support inclusive growth, extending opportunity beyond large international investors to local entrepreneurship in tourism services, retail, and logistics. Confidence in the long term value of infrastructure investment represents a further notable finding, one that contrasts with critical perspectives in the literature emphasizing the risk of underused, white elephant projects following mega events (Mangan & Dyreson, 2010). The optimism observed here may reflect awareness of Morocco's current development strategy, which explicitly integrates infrastructure expansion with broader economic and logistical objectives rather than treating stadiums and transport links as standalone, event specific investments.

Respondent views on tourism beyond 2030 similarly align with the literature on mega events as global marketing platforms that strengthen a host country's long term visibility and appeal, an effect likely to carry significant multiplier consequences for a country in which tourism already contributes substantially to national income. The importance respondents attach to sustainability, meanwhile, reflects a broader shift toward environmentally responsible models of event planning, consistent with the growing emphasis on environmental, social, and governance considerations

documented by Trendafilova, Babiak, and Heinze (2013), and it presents Morocco with an opportunity to align its World Cup preparations with its wider renewable energy commitments.

Finally, the findings on global reputation and strategic priorities support the concept of soft power that runs throughout the mega event literature. Respondents widely believe the tournament will enhance Morocco's global image and strengthen international relationships, an argument consistent with Grix and Lee's (2013) account of mega events as instruments through which emerging states project modernity, openness, and stability. The joint hosting arrangement with Spain and Portugal further reinforces this potential by situating Morocco within a transcontinental partnership, while the emphasis respondents place on attracting foreign investors and developing sustainable infrastructure suggests that the World Cup is understood as a long term economic strategy rather than a short term event, reinforcing the case for integrating mega events into broader national development frameworks. These findings should nonetheless be read in light of the study's limitations, discussed in the methodology section. The relatively small sample of 57 respondents and the use of convenience sampling constrain generalizability, the reliance on perceptions rather than realized economic outcomes reflects the fact that the event has not yet taken place, and the use of structured, closed format questions necessarily limits the depth of individual responses. Future research could address these constraints by drawing on larger and more diverse samples that incorporate additional stakeholder groups such as policymakers, investors, and business owners, and by combining surveys with interviews or case studies to provide deeper insight into how opportunities are created and realized in practice. Comparative studies with previous host countries could likewise offer valuable lessons for maximizing long term economic benefit, while dedicated attention to questions such as how Morocco can ensure inclusive participation by local businesses, how infrastructure investment can be effectively utilized once the tournament has concluded, and how public and private partnerships can sustain long term foreign investment would each extend this early empirical contribution in valuable directions.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the international business opportunities that Morocco may derive from joint hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup alongside Spain and Portugal, proceeding from the premise that mega sporting events have evolved into global economic platforms capable of shaping tourism development, infrastructure investment, foreign direct investment, and international economic relations. By combining insights from the existing literature with empirical survey data, the study assessed how such an event may influence Morocco's position within the global business environment. The findings indicate that the 2030 FIFA World Cup is widely perceived as a significant opportunity for Morocco's economic and international business development. Both the literature and the empirical results point to tourism, infrastructure, and foreign investment as the sectors most likely to benefit, while the survey further reveals strong expectations regarding improvements in Morocco's global image, the strengthening of international partnerships, and

meaningful participation by small and medium enterprises. Sustainability emerged as an equally important consideration, reflecting the growing weight that environmentally responsible development now carries in mega event planning.

Importantly, the results demonstrate a close alignment between public perceptions and existing academic research on mega events. While the findings confirm the World Cup's potential to generate substantial economic and business opportunities, they also reinforce the view, well established in the literature, that these benefits are not automatic and depend on effective governance, strategic planning, and the ability to convert short term global exposure into long term economic gain. Morocco's distinctive geographic and economic position as a bridge between Africa and Europe further strengthens its capacity to capture the opportunities associated with the tournament, and the joint hosting arrangement offers an additional platform for international collaboration, investment attraction, and deeper integration into global value chains. Overall, this study concludes that the 2030 FIFA World Cup represents a genuine strategic opportunity for Morocco to strengthen its international business environment and enhance its global economic standing, though the extent to which these benefits are realized will ultimately depend on the country's ability to manage infrastructure investment efficiently, attract and retain foreign investors, support local businesses, and embed sustainability throughout its development strategy. In this sense, the 2030 FIFA World Cup has the potential to act as a genuine catalyst for Morocco's economic trajectory, provided that short term, event driven growth is deliberately aligned with long term development objectives. Achieving this alignment would allow Morocco to use the tournament not simply as a moment of global visibility, but as a durable step toward consolidating its role as a key economic hub linking Africa and Europe.

References

- Baade, R. A., & Matheson, V. A. (2016). Going for the gold: The economics of the Olympics. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 30(2), 201–218.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Chalip, L., & Costa, C. A. (2006). Building sport event tourism into the destination branding: Insights from the FIFA World Cup. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 11(2), 123–138.
- Cornelissen, S., & Swart, K. (2010). The 2010 Football World Cup as a political construct: The challenge of making good on an African promise. *The Sociological Review*, 54(s2), 108–123.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

- Fourie, J., & Santana Gallego, M. (2011). The impact of mega sport events on tourist arrivals. *Tourism Management*, 32(6), 1364–1370.
- Getz, D. (2012). *Event studies: Theory, research and policy for planned events* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Grix, J., & Houlihan, B. (2014). Sports mega events as part of a nation's soft power strategy. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 16(4), 572–596.
- Grix, J., & Lee, D. (2013). Soft power, sports mega events and emerging states: The lure of the politics of attraction. *Global Society*, 27(4), 521–536.
- Horne, J., & Manzenreiter, W. (2006). An introduction to the sociology of sports mega events. *The Sociological Review*, 54(s2), 1–24.
- Mangan, J. A., & Dyreson, M. (Eds.). (2010). *Olympic legacies: Intended and unintended: Political, cultural, economic and educational*. Routledge.
- Peeters, T., Matheson, V. A., & Szymanski, S. (2014). Tourism and the 2010 World Cup: Lessons for developing countries. *Journal of African Economies*, 23(2), 290–320.
- Preuss, H. (2019). Event legacy framework and measurement. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 11(1), 103–118.
- Qatar Tourism. (2023). *Tourism performance report 2023*. <https://www.qatartourism.com>
- Rose, A. K., & Spiegel, M. M. (2011). The Olympic effect. *The Economic Journal*, 121(553), 652–677.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Solberg, H. A., & Preuss, H. (2007). Major sport events and long term tourism impacts. *Journal of Sport Management*, 21(2), 213–234.
- Trendafilova, S., Babiak, K., & Heinze, K. (2013). Corporate social responsibility and environmental sustainability: Why professional sport is greening the playing field. *Sport Management Review*, 16(3), 298–313.
- World Bank. (2024). *Morocco economic monitor*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco>