Министерство науки и высшего образования Российской Федерации
Федеральное государственное автономное образовательное учреждение
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«Уральский федеральный университет
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Институт экономики и управления
Школа государственного управления и предпринимательства

Кафедра интегрированных маркетинговых коммуникаций и брендинга

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ДОПУСТИТЬ К ЗАЩИТЕ ПЕРЕД ГЭК

Зав. кафедрой интегрированных маркетинговых коммуникаций и брендинга _____ Г.А. Савчук

«_____»_____ г.

</div>

**ВЫПУСКНАЯ КВАЛИФИКАЦИОННАЯ РАБОТА
(МАГИСТЕРСКАЯ ДИССЕРТАЦИЯ)**

ОЦЕНКА ВКЛАДА ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ КУЛЬТУРНОЙ ДИПЛОМАТИИ В ПОСТРОЕНИЕ И ПРОДВИЖЕНИЕ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО БРЕНДА

42.04.01 Реклама и связи с общественностью

Научный руководитель: Банных Галина Алексеевна
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Екатеринбург 2024

ОЦЕНКА ВКЛАДА ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ КУЛЬТУРНОЙ ДИПЛОМАТИИ В ПОСТРОЕНИЕ И ПРОДВИЖЕНИЕ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО БРЕНДА ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY TECHNOLOGIES TO THE CONSTRUCTION AND PROMOTION OF A NATIONAL BRAND

ЗАЩИТНОЕ СЛОВО

Уважаемые профессора,

Наше исследование направлено на демонстрацию роли культурной дипломатии в улучшении национального бренда Марокко.

Объектом данной диссертации является исследование процесса формирования и продвижения национального бренда, а предметом – культурная дипломатия в контексте создания и продвижения национального бренда Марокко. Целью является изучение инструментов культурной дипломатии в формировании и продвижении национального бренда, оценка их роли в создании марокканского национального бренда и предложение проекта по улучшению их применения.

Диссертация носит преимущественно теоретический характер и направлена на обогащение литературы по культурной дипломатии и ее связи с национальным брендингом. Новизна нашего исследования заключается в том, что, насколько нам известно, эта тема ранее не рассматривалась в контексте Марокко. Таким образом, данная диссертация стремится заполнить этот пробел, исследуя марокканскую культурную дипломатию и ее влияние на национальный бренд, с акцентом на три основных инструмента: прием иностранных студентов, Институт Мохаммеда VI по подготовке имамов и проповедников и участие в крупных спортивных мероприятиях.

Наше исследование углубляется в то, как страны используют культурную дипломатию для улучшения своего национального бренда с

помощью различных инструментов. Упомянутые три инструмента представляют собой новое направление в более широкой области культурной дипломатии, которая включает множество других инструментов. Кроме того, в диссертации предлагается новое определение культурной дипломатии, подчеркивающее улучшение национального бренда как одного из ее результатов.

Методология данной диссертации носит преимущественно качественный характер, с акцентом на тематический анализ для обработки данных. Используются как первичные, так и вторичные источники, с упором на первичные источники, поддержанные вторичными. Первичные источники включают анализ документов государственных органов (таких как официальные отчеты, коммюнике, пресс-релизы и заключения), тогда как вторичные источники включают интервью с марокканскими официальными лицами и представителями стран-бенефициаров, отзывы и обратную связь студентов, которые воспользовались этими инициативами культурной дипломатии, а также академические статьи, книги и отчеты.

Использование первичных источников в этом исследовании оценивается в 60%, тогда как вторичные источники составляют 40%.

Для ответа на исследовательские вопросы ключевые инструменты культурной дипломатии разделены на пять групп, после чего проводится углубленный анализ трех конкретных инструментов для оценки их эффективности. Надежность и валидность обеспечиваются через перекрестную проверку множества источников и отдельный анализ неоднозначных данных с усилиями по триангуляции выводов. Ограничения, такие как субъективность интерпретации и времязатратность анализа, признаются, и исследование сужает свой фокус до трех инструментов для более детального изучения.

В Главе 1 мы исследовали концепции, связанные с нашим исследованием, такие как мягкая сила, публичная дипломатия, культурная дипломатия, национальный брендинг и конкурентная идентичность. Эта глава создает основу для руководства нашим эмпирическим сбором данных, подчеркивая, как культурная дипломатия как мягкая сила может быть реализована для создания или продвижения национального бренда путем использования конкурентной идентичности страны, с акцентом на стратегию, содержание и символические действия.

Глава 2 углубляется в три инструмента культурной дипломатии, представляющих три группы: прием иностранных студентов как инструмент образовательных и языковых программ, Институт Мохаммеда VI по подготовке имамов и проповедников как религиозный инструмент и участие в крупных спортивных мероприятиях, в частности участие Марокко в чемпионате мира по футболу 2022 года как спортивный инструмент. Используя качественный метод с тематическим анализом, мы выбрали три темы для каждого инструмента. Для приема иностранных студентов первой темой является рост числа иностранных студентов в Марокко, с заметным увеличением числа африканских студентов. Вторая тема – предоставление стипендий через агентство AMCI, что способствует интернационализации марокканского государственного высшего образования, преимущественно пользуясь странам Африки южнее Сахары. Третья тема – использование этого инструмента для обучения будущих африканских лидеров и послов марокканской культуры. Многие студенты, обучавшиеся в Марокко, позже занимали высокие должности в своих странах, увеличивая влияние Марокко.

Второй инструмент, Институт Мохаммеда VI по подготовке имамов и проповедников, исследуется через три темы. Первая тема – продвижение умеренного ислама, подчеркивающего четыре столпа: универсальные

ценности (терпимость, сосуществование, любовь, мир, диалог), борьба с экстремизмом и радикализацией, межрелигиозный диалог и интеграция женщин. Вторая тема – международное влияние и мягкая сила института, который обучал имамов и проповедников из различных регионов, преимущественно Африки. Третья тема касается учебного плана, включающего преподавание таких предметов, как другие религии, социальные науки, языки и ИТ, помогая студентам приобретать знания в различных современных дисциплинах для эффективного продвижения умеренного ислама.

Третий инструмент – участие Марокко в чемпионате мира по футболу 2022 года как средство культурной дипломатии. Первая тема – продвижение марокканских ценностей, проявляющееся в послематчевых празднованиях и освещении в СМИ. Вторая тема – континентальная и единая гордость, с поддержкой марокканской команды от африканских, арабских и исламских регионов. Третья тема – всемирное внимание, привлеченное этим участием, что стимулировало туристический сектор Марокко через увеличенный интерес в поисковых системах и освещение в СМИ.

Анализ этих трех инструментов демонстрирует их значительное влияние на национальный бренд Марокко, причем каждый инструмент воздействует по-разному в зависимости от контекста, типа и региона. Это помогает ответить на наши исследовательские вопросы и поддерживает наши гипотезы.

В Главе 3 мы обсуждаем и интерпретируем результаты из Главы 2, предоставляя рекомендации для улучшения марокканской культурной дипломатии. Для приема иностранных студентов, статистика по количеству принятых студентов и стипендий подчеркивает эффективность этого инструмента, с акцентом на Африку. Рекомендации включают создание платформы «Учись в Марокко» и улучшение цифровизации порталов

марокканских университетов. Для Института Мохаммеда VI продвижение его версии ислама было эффективным, и дальнейшие предложения включают усиление интеграции женщин за счет увеличения числа мест в институте. Что касается участия в крупных спортивных мероприятиях, предложен план улучшения конкурентной идентичности Марокко через проведение предстоящего чемпионата мира по футболу 2030 года. Он включает три компонента: стратегию, содержание и символические действия. Этот план включает три проанализированных инструмента: участие в таком крупном спортивном событии, продвижение Марокко как центра высшего образования и подчеркивание культурного богатства и религиозной терпимости страны.

В заключение, это исследование, используя Марокко в качестве примера, помогает нам понять роль культурной дипломатии в улучшении национального бренда, независимо от размера страны, доступных ресурсов или текущего состояния бренда. Оно показывает, что культурная дипломатия, а не только экономическая или военная мощь, может повысить национальный бренд. Однако оценка эффективности этих инструментов остается сложной, так как оценка применения мягкой силы требует дальнейших исследований.

Министерство науки и высшего образования Российской Федерации
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«Уральский федеральный университет имени первого Президента России Б.Н. Ельцина»

Институт экономики и управления
Кафедра интегрированных маркетинговых коммуникаций и брендинга
Направление 42.04.01. Реклама и связи с общественностью
Образовательная программа PR и реклама в международных коммуникациях

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УТВЕРЖДАЮ
Зав. кафедрой интегрированных
маркетинговых коммуникаций и брендинга

___*Савчук* _____   Г.А. Савчук
(подпись)   (Ф.И.О.)

«6» апреля 2023 г.
</div>

ЗАДАНИЕ
на выполнение выпускной квалификационной работы (магистерской диссертации)

**студента _Мбарек Абаллат_ группы ЭУМ-223812
(фамилия, имя, отчество)

1 Тема ВКР Оценка вклада технологий культурной дипломатии в построение и продвижение национального бренда **/ Assessment of the contribution of cultural diplomacy technologies to the construction and promotion of a national brand
Утверждена распоряжением по институту от «6» апреля 2023 г. №33.01-05/2/047
 **Руководитель _Банных Галина Алексеевна, канд. соц.наук, доцент_
(Ф.И.О., должность, ученое звание, ученая степень)

**3 Исходные данные к работе: книги, монографии, статьи зарубежных ученых, информация с Интернет-ресурсов (аккаунты в социальных сетях и веб-сайты исследуемых организаций).
4 Содержание пояснительной записки (перечень подлежащих разработке вопросов)

- Изучить теоретические особенности создания и продвижения национального бренда

– Рассмотреть феномен Культурной дипломатии и ее инструменты

– Разработать методологию оценки элементов марокканского национального бренда

– Провести анализ Марокканских инструментов культурной дипломатии

– Разработать рекомендации по укрепление стратегии культурной дипломатии Марокко

– 5 Перечень демонстрационных материалов _ таблицы, схемы, рисунки,изображения
6 Консультанты по проекту (работе) с указанием относящихся к ним разделов проекта*

Раздел	Консультант	Подпись, дата	
		задание выдал	задание принял
Нормоконтроль	Ульянова Е.В.	*Ульянова*	*Ульянова*

7 Календарный план

Наименование этапов выполнения работы	Срок выполнения этапов работы	Отметка о выполнении

Написание первой главы магистерской диссертации	08 декабря 2023 г.	Выполнено
Написание второй главы магистерской диссертации	04 апреля 2024 г.	Выполнено
Написание чистового варианта диссертации	10 мая 2024 г.	Выполнено

**Руководитель _____*Банных*   _____Г.А.Банных__
                        (подпись)   Ф.И.О.

**Задание принял к исполнению _____*Мбарек Абаллат*_____
                                                        (подпись)

8 Выпускная квалификационная работа (магистерская диссертация) закончена
 «__5__» ___*июня*_____ 2024   г.

Пояснительная записка и все материалы просмотрены
Оценка консультантов:* а) *Ульянова*_____

**Считаю возможным допустить ___ Мбарека Абаллата
к защите его выпускной квалификационной работы (магистерской диссертации) в экзаменационной комиссии.

                                                Руководитель _____ *Банных* ___

**9 Допустить _____ Мбарека Абаллата __ к защите выпускной квалификационной работы (магистерской диссертации) в экзаменационной комиссии (протокол заседания кафедры № _6____ от «5» июня_ 2024 г.)

Зав. кафедрой____*Савчук*_____   _____Г.А. Савчук_____
                        (подпись)   Ф.И.О.

 * - при наличии разделов, требующие привлечение консультантов

РЕФЕРАТ

Эта магистерская диссертация посвящена исследованию области культурной дипломатии и ее основополагающей роли в укреплении бренда страны.

Цель исследования - изучить технологии культурной дипломатии в конструировании и продвижении национального бренда, оценить технологию культурной дипломатии при создании Марокко и предложить проект по совершенствованию применения таких технологий. Объектом исследования является создание и продвижение национального бренда. Предмет исследования - технология культурной дипломатии в строительстве и продвижении национального бренда Марокко.

В ходе исследования анализируются теоретическое основы построения и продвижения национального бренда, используемые при этом технологии культурной дипломатии. В практической части анализируется национальный бренд Марокко в контексте модели С.Анхольта, изучаются основные технологии культурной дипломатии: интернализация образования, подготовка священников и имамов, проведение и освещение международных культурных мегасобытий.

Укрепить бренд Марокко предлагается через создание платформы «Обучение в Марокко», повышение уровня цифровизации университетских порталов Марокко, увеличение количества мест для женщин в Институте им. Мухаммеда VI, а также создание ассоциации выпускников для бывших имамов и проповедников.

Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation
Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of
Higher Education
"Ural Federal University
named after the First President of Russia B. N. Yeltsin"
Institute of Economics and Management
School of Public Administration and Entrepreneurship
Department of Integrated Marketing Communications and Branding

FINAL QUALIFICATION WORK (MASTER'S THESIS)

ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY TOOLS TO BUILDING AND PROMOTING A NATION BRAND

Supervisor: Bannykh Galina Alekseevna

candidate of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor

Format controller: Ulyanova Elena Vladimirovna

Student of the group EUM-223812: Mbarek Aballat

Ekaterinburg

2024

ABSTRACT

This master's thesis explores the realm of cultural diplomacy and its pivotal role in enhancing a nation's brand, with Morocco serving as a case study.

The purpose of the study - to study the tool of cultural diplomacy in building and promoting a nation brand, to assess the role of cultural diplomacy tools in the building of the Moroccan nation brand and to propose a project to improve the application of these tools.

The object of research is the building and promotion of a nation brand

Subject of study - the tool of cultural diplomacy in building and promotion of the nation brand of Morocco

In the course of the study, theoretical bases for building and promoting the nation brand, using the tool of cultural diplomacy, are analyzed. The practical part analyzes the nation brand of Morocco in the context of the competitive identity's Anholt model and studies the main tools of cultural diplomacy: hosting international students, the Mohamed VI Institute for Training Imams and Preachers, and participating in mega-sporting events.

Strengthening the brand of Morocco is proposed through the establishment of the "Study in Morocco" platform, the enhancement of digitalization in Moroccan university portals, the increase of places for women at the Mohamed VI Institute, the formation of an alumni association for former imams and preachers, and finally, a proposed competitive identity for hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup.

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INTRODUCTION

As countries become more connected and interdependent, their reputations on the global stage are becoming increasingly important. Many countries are recognizing the value of a strong nation brand, and are investing in initiatives to enhance their reputation and influence. One such initiative is cultural diplomacy, the use of a state's national culture in order to advance its foreign policy goals or foster mutual understanding. (Johnson, 2018) It can be argued that cultural diplomacy constitutes an additional cornerstone of foreign policy, alongside the conventional pillars of political diplomacy and economic diplomacy (Hurn, 2016).

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the concept of nation branding, which involves utilizing branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image (Fan, 2005). As a result, an increasing number of countries have been allocating resources towards building and promoting their own nation brand. (Melissen, 2005; Dinnie, 2015) The rise of nation branding can be attributed to the realization that a positive brand image can lead to numerous benefits, such as increased investment, exports, tourism, political influence (Anholt, 2007, Morgan et al., 2004).

The importance of a strong nation brand extends beyond the realm of traditional "megabrands" nations such as the United States, France, Italy, and others (Anholt, 2007), with developing countries also recognizing the value of cultivating their global image. In this context, cultural diplomacy can play a crucial role in shaping a nation's brand, particularly for developing countries that may not have the same resources or established global presence as their more developed counterparts (Cull, 2009; Simon, 2009).

Cultural diplomacy, as an essential component of nation branding (Hurn, 2016) plays a significant role in presenting the unique cultural aspects of a country to international audiences. Through cultural exchanges, exhibitions, performances, and other activities, cultural diplomacy can foster understanding, challenge stereotypes, and

facilitate dialogue between different cultures (Cummings, 2003). By showcasing the richness and diversity of a country's culture, these initiatives serve not only to enhance the nation's image but also to promote its values and interests in the global arena. As a result, cultural diplomacy has the potential to contribute significantly to the building and promotion of a nation brand, making it an important area of investigation for scholars and practitioners alike.

Morocco, with its rich cultural heritage and strategic geographical location as a gateway between Africa and Europe, is an intriguing case study for examining the role of cultural diplomacy in promoting a nation's brand. The country's history is marked by the influence of various civilizations, including the indigenous Berber, Arab, and Jewish cultures, as well as colonial powers such as the French, and Spanish. This cultural patchwork has given rise to a unique Moroccan identity, encompassing a diverse array of traditions, languages, arts, and cuisine.

Following the accession of King Mohammed VI to the throne in July 1999, Morocco's foreign policy underwent a significant shift, with a renewed focus on cultural diplomacy. The King stressed the importance of incorporating cultural diplomacy into the country's foreign policy and establishing cohesive and comprehensive cultural initiatives abroad. In his Royal Message to the Participants of the Ambassadors Conference in 2013, He stated, "it is essential to provide [cultural diplomacy) with the support and encouragement it deserves, especially through the establishment of Moroccan cultural centers and missions abroad, intensifying artistic activities, and organizing exhibitions to showcase Morocco's rich cultural and civilizational heritage." (King Mohamed VI, 2013).

However, the impact and effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in the context of building and promoting the Moroccan nation brand have not been extensively studied. Therefore, this thesis aims to assess the contribution of cultural diplomacy tools to the building and promoting of the Moroccan nation brand, by analyzing the objectives, actors, strategies, and outcomes of selected cultural diplomacy initiatives. This will help to shed

light on the role of cultural diplomacy in enhancing a nation's reputation and influence on the global stage.

The novelty of this study lies in the fact that, to the best of our knowledge, no previous attempts have been made to assess the contribution of cultural diplomacy tools to the building and promoting of the Moroccan nation brand. Despite the growing interest in Moroccan cultural diplomacy and its potential to enhance the country's image, there is a gap in the literature regarding its application to the nation brand in Morocco. This paper attempts to fill in this gap by addressing the following research questions:

− What are the key cultural diplomacy tools employed by Morocco to build and promote its nation brand?

− How effective have these cultural diplomacy tools been in building and promoting the Moroccan nation brand?

The purpose of the study - to study the tool of cultural diplomacy in building and promoting a nation brand, to assess the role of cultural diplomacy tools in the building of the Moroccan nation brand and to propose a project to improve the application of these tools

The object of research is the building and promotion of a nation brand

Subject of study - the tool of cultural diplomacy in building and promotion of the nation brand of Morocco

Methodology. This study will conduct a thematic analysis of primary and secondary sources to identify the primary tools and instruments utilized by Morocco in its cultural diplomacy efforts. These tools will be categorized based on their functions and similarities. For the second research question, the study will examine the relationship between these cultural diplomacy tools and the Moroccan nation brand, exploring how each tool contributes to shaping the nation brand. The study employs a qualitative method approach, combining primary sources obtained through document analysis - such as governmental documents, official communiqués, press releases, and conclusions - alongside secondary sources, which include interviews with Moroccan officials and

officials from beneficiary countries, as well as testimonials and feedback from students who have benefited from these cultural diplomacy initiatives. Additionally, the study will incorporate a comprehensive review of relevant literature, including academic articles, books, reports, and analyses conducted by researchers in the field.

The practical value of the study lies in the study of the tools used in Moroccan cultural diplomacy and, on the basis of the results, improving their application to strengthen the nation brand

The thesis will be structured into three chapters: Introduction, first theoretical chapter, second empirical based chapter, third project chapter and Conclusions. Chapter 1, will delve into relevant theories related to the research, with 2 sub-chapters. The first one will discuss the concepts of nation branding and competitive identity as methods for countries to effectively build and promote their nation brand. Additionally, it will examine the two models of building a nation brand proposed by Fan and Dinnie. The second one will explore various theories and concepts related to power, public diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy. It will conclude that cultural diplomacy can be utilized as a tool to wield soft power and shape international perceptions about a country within the framework of public diplomacy.

Chapter two will provide detailed insight into the research methodology employed for gathering data. It will also present and discuss the findings of the study. Finally, chapter 3 will conclude the research by summarizing the main findings with practical recommendations for enhancing the use of cultural diplomacy in the Moroccan context.

Within this thesis, I hypothesize that Morocco's cultural diplomacy tools have a positive impact on its nation brand by enhancing its image, reputation, and influence abroad. Furthermore, the impact of Morocco's cultural diplomacy tools varies according to the type, target, and context of each tool. This impact can be measured using quantitative and qualitative methods, such as surveys, interviews, and content analysis. Finally, these tools are more effective in building and promoting its nation brand in Africa than in other regions, owing to its historical, cultural, and political ties with the continent.

In conclusion, this thesis aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the role of cultural diplomacy in promoting a nation's brand. By examining the case of Morocco, the study seeks to shed light on the potential of cultural diplomacy initiatives to enhance a country's reputation and influence on the global stage. Ultimately, the findings of this study may be of interest to scholars and practitioners in the field of international relations, cultural diplomacy, and nation branding.

1 Theoretical foundations of cultural diplomacy instruments in nation branding process

1.1 Building and Promoting a Nation Brand

In today's globalized world, every place, whether it's a country, city, or region, is in competition with others for attention and resources. This competition extends to attracting consumers, tourists, investors, students, entrepreneurs, international events, among others. It also involves gaining recognition from the international media, foreign governments, and people from other nations (Anholt, 2007). Securing attention and resources is directly linked to the image portrayed to the audience. This image is assessed through its reputation, which can be either positive or negative.

The fierce competition among these actors to enhance their "brand" explains the importance of country reputation, which is comparable to the brand images of companies and products (Anholt, 2007). However, it should be noted that a nation cannot be treated like a product, and there are limits to this idea. A nation's brand should come from its culture and what makes it unique, not just from flashy advertising (Dinnie, 2015).

Nevertheless, a nation's reputation is not something that can be created from scratch; it must be genuinely earned through real actions and behavior. The best way to improve one's reputation is to actually be the kind of person or nation that you want others to think you are (Anholt, 2010). In other words, actions and behavior speak louder than words when it comes to reputation. This reputation, in the context of a country, exerts a direct and measurable influence on nearly every facet of its interactions with other nations, wielding a significant impact on its economic, social, political, and cultural advancement (Anholt, 2007).

The terms "Nation brand" and "Nation Branding," originally coined by Simon Anholt in 1996 and widely recognized since then, has been explored by different academics. Fan defines nation brand as the total sum of all mental associations about a nation in the mind of international stakeholders (Anholt, 2008). Dinnie defines it as the unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences (Dinnie, 2015). This underscores a difference in their perspectives: Fan focuses on how people perceive a country, while Dinnie emphasizes how a country presents itself to the world. However, these viewpoints can be harmonized; it's about both perception and presentation. The difference lies in the perspective used, whether it's from the sender's angle (the country) or the receiver's angle (the public).

Moreover, the term nation branding is defined by Fan as the application of branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image (Fan, 2006). Anholt, who coined this term, however, prefers to term nation branding as "Competitive Identity". He describes it as the synthesis of brand management with public diplomacy and with trade, investment, tourism and export promotion, to strengthen a nation's competitiveness in a global world (Anholt, 2007).

According to Fan, a nation has multiple identities and must determine its core or primary image for projection to the outside world (Fan, 2008). These identities collectively shape a nation's brand, which can be categorized into three sub-brands: political brand, economic/commercial brand, and cultural brand (Fan, 2008). Nation brand involves positioning and branding to convey the desired image to the audience, culminating in the ultimate outcome. This process is illustrated in *Figure 1* below.

Nation branding has been associated with other terms such as place branding (Anholt, 2010), destination branding (Tasci & Gartner, 2009), and country branding (Restrepo et al., 2008; Mittilä & Laurén, 2014). Though these terms might have subtle differences, they all revolve around managing and promoting the image and perception of a place, be it a country, a city, or any other specific location with the purpose to maintain

its reputation. For the purposes of this paper, nation brand signifies the holistic representation of a country, encompassing the nation (a collective group of people sharing language and ethnicity), the state (viewed as a political entity) (Fan, 2008), and the place (viewed as a particular geographic location. In our case, it refers to an entire country, rather than a singular city or region).
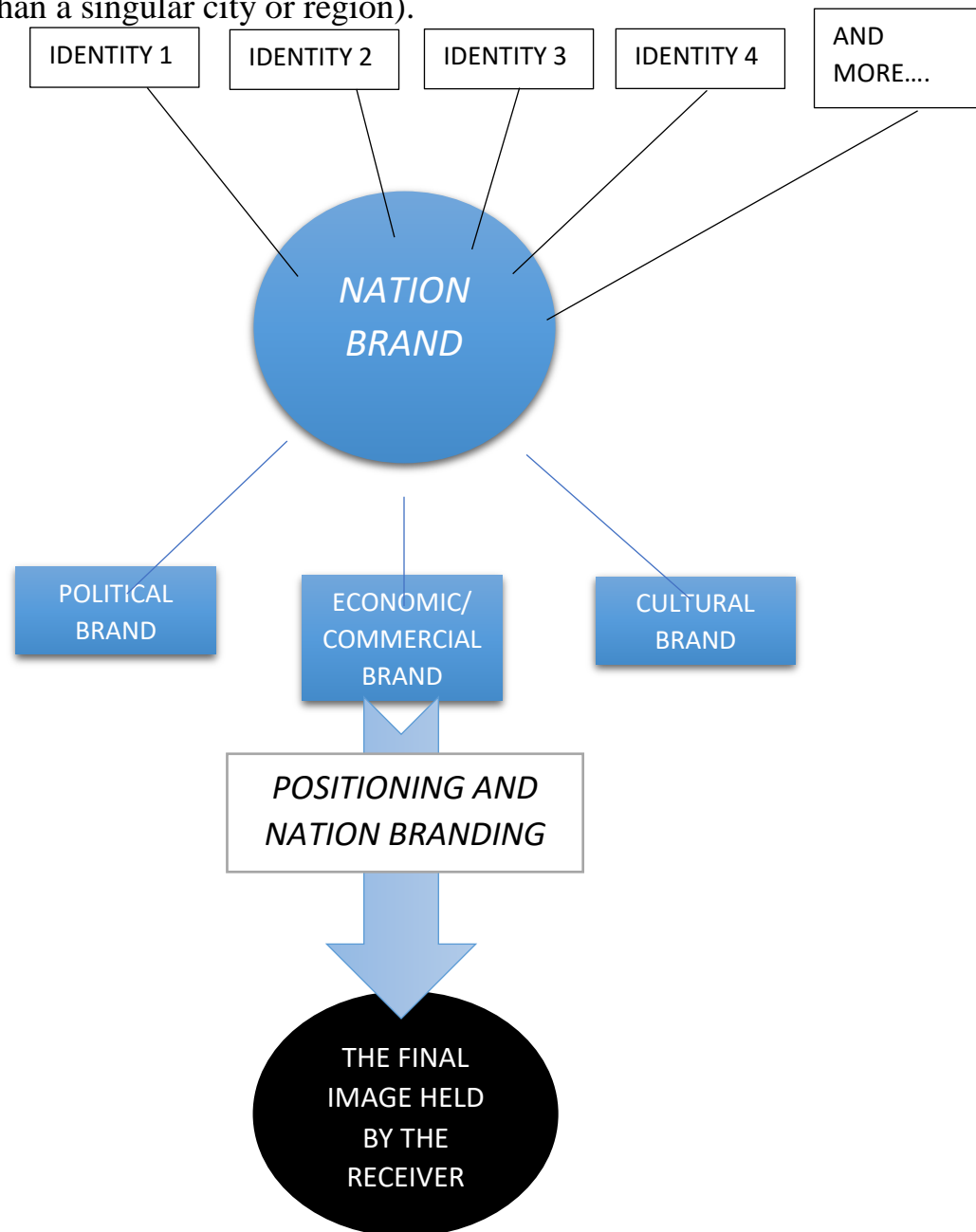
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IDENTITY 1    IDENTITY 2    IDENTITY 3    IDENTITY 4    AND
                                                        MORE....
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NATION BRAND

POLITICAL BRAND

ECONOMIC/ COMMERCIAL BRAND

CULTURAL BRAND

POSITIONING AND NATION BRANDING

THE FINAL IMAGE HELD BY THE RECEIVER

Figure 1. The process of nation branding from identity to the final image, based on Fan (2008) analyses[1]

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[1] Compiled by the author

I argue that a nation's brand is the image containing various identities projected to the world by a country and held by the public or stakeholders, whether formed consciously without the direct country's influence or as a result of a branding process. On the other hand, nation branding is the active management of that image, which should be aligned with the reality of the respective country to maintain the nation's reputation.

This authenticity, aligned with a long-term strategic process, ensures it reflects the nation's true essence and the desired perception. Otherwise, it risks being perceived as propaganda, failing to enhance the country's reputation—worse, possibly diminishing it. In other words, a country should ensure that it matches who they truly are and how they want to be seen. For instance, a nation might want to be seen as a hub of technological innovation and advancement. Still, if the country's infrastructure, educational policies, or industry regulations are outdated or don't encourage innovation, it contradicts the image they are trying to project.

The concept of branding a nation has prompted a division among academics into two perspectives. One view supports the application of marketing branding techniques to nation branding, while the other contends that a nation should not be treated as a product or service. Anholt criticizes the concept of nation branding, which he defines as a misleading and ineffective attempt to manipulate the images of countries using commercial marketing techniques, mainly by "naïve governments" in willing collusion with ambitious consulting firms. This criticism led him to rebrand the term as "Competitive Identity" mentioned earlier. He argues that countries are judged by what they do, not by what they say, and that branding is the problem, not the solution, for countries with weak or negative reputations (Anholt, 2013).

Strategies in Building and Promoting a Nation Brand. As previously mentioned, a country's brand can exist with or without active branding efforts, as argued by Fan each country has a current image to its international audience, be it strong or weak, clear or vague (Fan, 2006). However, for the purposes of this paper, specifically in this Chapter 2, the focus will be on the first option, where efforts made by the country to build, promote,

and manage its nation brand to the audience as it is the sender. This aligns with Dinnie's definition of nation brand regarding the efforts taken by the country to establish itself as culturally distinctive and relevant to the audiences it aims to connect with.

When we talk about building and promoting a brand for a nation we are simply referring to nation branding as they are two key pillars of it. It involves three main approaches: building from scratch, attempting to re-brand the current image in a more positive light than the previous one held by others in a response to negative perceptions or stereotypes, or simply managing the existing brand and promoting it to enhance the country's reputation.

Before delving into these approaches, it's essential to establish a clear understanding of "Nation Brand Identity", "Nation Brand Image", and "Nation Brand Equity". Nation Brand Identity represents the character or personality of a country. Similar to how individuals have their unique identities, countries also possess distinctive identities. As presented in Fan's model above of nation branding, a country may have several identities, and it must choose which ones it aims to project globally. On the other hand, Nation Brand Image reflects how people perceive a country. It's a composite impression based on various factors—personal experiences, information from others, portrayals in media such as movies or TV shows, and more. Collectively, these elements shape the image of a country within the audience's minds (Dinnie, 2015).

In the commercial sector, brand equity refers to "the value" of a brand. The more a brand has a strong equity, the more likely it is to be recognized, trusted, and chosen by consumers. Similarly, a nation brand equity is how much people value and trust a country's brand, including what they think about it and how it affects the country's success and influence. Dinnie defines it as the tangible and intangible, internal and external assets (or liabilities) of the nation (Dinnie, 2015). These assets represent the sources of nation brand equity. They impact how a country is seen and valued in the eyes of the world. Anholt emphasizes that a country's nation brand equity is among its most valuable assets,

necessitating the government's ongoing commitment to nurture, protect, and ideally enhance this asset (Anholt, 2007).

Building or promoting a nation brand mainly focuses on these three elements: nation brand identity, nation brand image, and nation brand equity. The approach varies based on whether the aim is to build a nation brand from scratch, rebranding an existing one, or promoting and managing a nation brand to uphold its reputation. For instance, a country's stereotype or the way people perceive it can be outdated or not aligned with the current reality. When this happens, there's a great opportunity for nation branding to step in. In other words, when a country's identity doesn't match the public's perception, efforts can be made to reshape or rebrand its image to be aligned with its real identity. This allows the country to reposition itself more favorably with its target audiences (Gilmore, 2002; Dinnie, 2015), positively influencing the nation brand equity and enhancing the reputation of the nation brand.

Dinnie introduced a conceptual model of nation brand identity and image, aiming to build or promote a nation brand by leveraging these two components to attaint a country specific nation brand objectives (Dinnie, 2015). This model consists of three elements: Nation Brand Identity which has several key components such as: history, language, sport, ect. The second elements is the communicators of this identity, or the agents or channels that convey it to the audience such as: branded exports, sporting achievements, the diaspora, ect. The last element is the outcome or the result of this process which is Nation Brand Image as it reflects how the audiences perceive and evaluate the nation brand identity.

To enhance this model, two additional elements are proposed by the author: Sub-Identities and Nation Brand Equity. The sub-identities formulate the components mentioned earlier within the broader "Nation Brand Identity". For instance, a sub-identity of culture can consist of components such as language, music, history, and so forth, while a sub-identity of economy can consist of factors such as trade, economic policies, finance. The second element is Nation Brand Equity, which includes elements such as awareness,

reputation, loyalty, etc., helping to measure the value or the benefit of a nation brand. This model is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Understanding these foundational elements of nation brand identity, image, and equity forms the guiding principles for comprehending how a country's brand is formulated, communicated, and perceived. However, this understanding alone is not sufficient for a country to achieve its desired outcomes; practical and well-structured actions are necessary. Simon Anholt's Competitive Identity framework addresses this need by offering a framework of practical dimensions for enhancing national competitiveness. This framework emphasizes three pivotal components: strategy, substance, and symbolic actions.

The first component is strategy. Having a clear strategy is crucial; it shows where a nation currently stands, where it aims to be, and how it plans to get there. Without a strategy, efforts may lack direction and focus. The second component is substance, which refers to the actual implementation of the strategy through real and tangible actions across various sectors such as economics, law, politics, culture, and education. These actions are the core initiatives, reforms, and policies that drive real progress and change in the country.

The last component is symbolic actions, a specific type of substance possessing powerful communicative qualities. These actions are memorable, remarkable, and narrate a story about the nation. Whether in the form of laws, innovations, or policies, they symbolize the strategy and reinforce the country's overarching narrative.
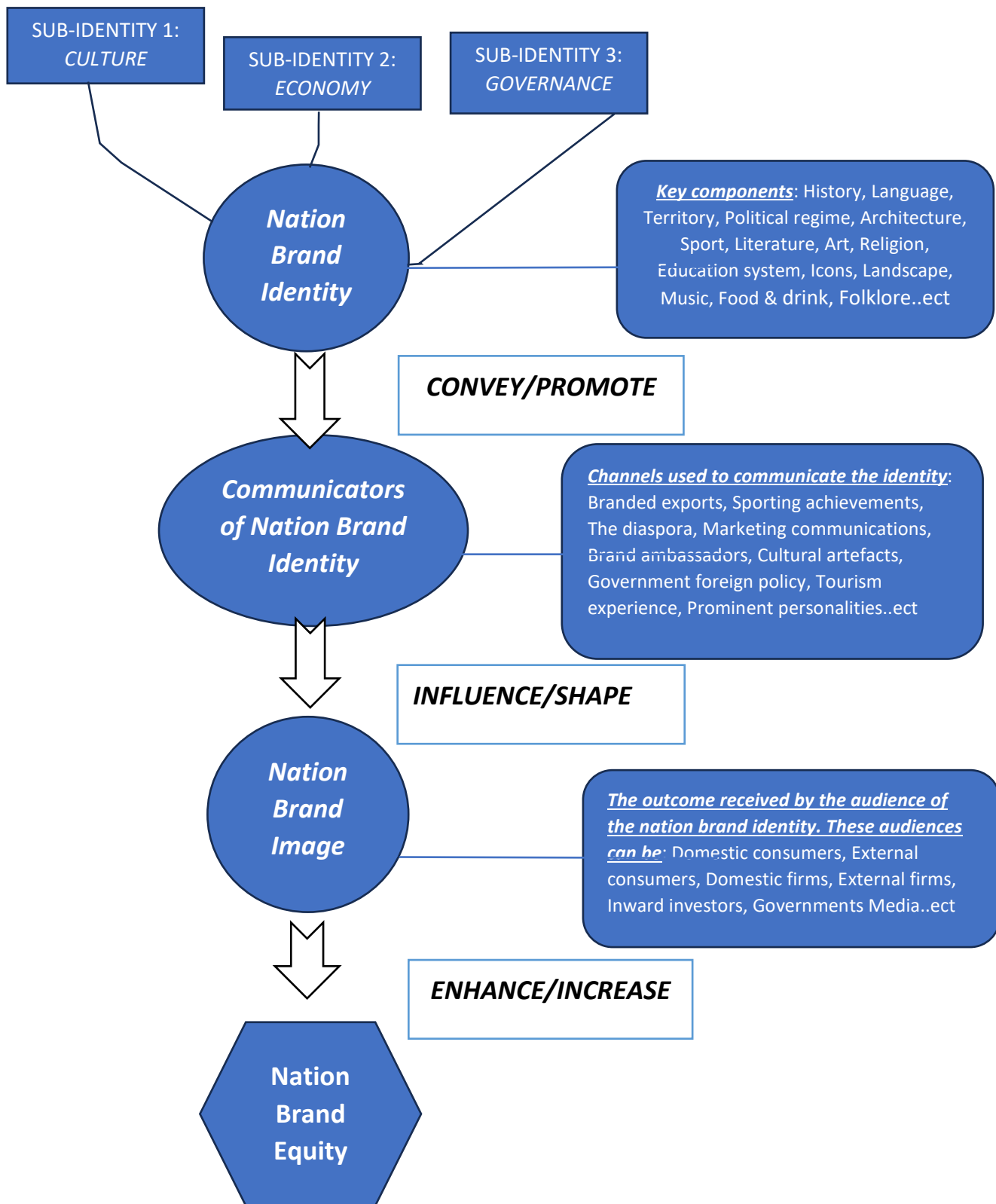
SUB-IDENTITY 1: *CULTURE*

SUB-IDENTITY 2: *ECONOMY*

SUB-IDENTITY 3: *GOVERNANCE*

Nation Brand Identity

Key components: History, Language, Territory, Political regime, Architecture, Sport, Literature, Art, Religion, Education system, Icons, Landscape, Music, Food & drink, Folklore..ect

CONVEY/PROMOTE

Communicators of Nation Brand Identity

Channels used to communicate the identity: Branded exports, Sporting achievements, The diaspora, Marketing communications, Brand ambassadors, Cultural artefacts, Government foreign policy, Tourism experience, Prominent personalities..ect

INFLUENCE/SHAPE

Nation Brand Image

The outcome received by the audience of the nation brand identity. These audiences can be: Domestic consumers, External consumers, Domestic firms, External firms, Inward investors, Governments Media..ect

ENHANCE/INCREASE

Nation Brand Equity

Figure 2 - Dinnie's conceptual model of nation brand identity and image (2015)[2]

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[2] Modified by the Author.

The effectiveness of symbolic actions relies on three critical elements. Firstly, it underscores the need for consistency across multiple actions. It emphasizes that a single symbolic action, on its own, won't have a lasting impact. To create a comprehensive and believable image for a place, various actions from different sectors are necessary. Secondly, substance and defensibility are highlighted as vital aspects. It advocates that these symbolic actions should possess meaningful substance, going beyond superficial communication. Each action needs to be justifiable and defensible, even when viewed separately. Lastly, continuity over time is stressed. It points out the importance of ongoing efforts.

We can say that strategy provides a clear roadmap for building the nation's brand, while substance gives it credibility and ensures it's not just empty marketing. Symbolic actions, on the other hand, are like the vibrant colors and striking visuals that make a brand memorable and resonate with people. They capture attention and leave a lasting impression, making the nation's brand stand out.

However, the absence of any one of these components can impact the country differently, depending on which component is missing. For instance, if a country formulates a sound strategy and takes corresponding actions such as infrastructure development and legal improvements but neglects symbolic actions, it risks remaining invisible or underestimated on the international stage. It's like having a two-legged stool – an unstable foundation that requires all three elements to stand firm (Anholt, 2010).

1.2 Cultural diplomacy and its instruments

The purpose of this chapter is to review the existing literature on power theory, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and nation branding. It aims to examine these concepts and their interactions. Within the first part, Joseph Nye's soft power concept is

applied to the power section, while Nicholas Cull's new public diplomacy is used in the public diplomacy section and linked it with Cultural Diplomacy as an element within it. In the cultural diplomacy section, different definitions by various scholars are discussed, leading to the formulation of a new definition that attempts to address the paper's questions. Furthermore, cultural diplomacy instruments are divided into five main types: Education and language programs, Religious diplomacy, Sports and athletics, Philanthropy and humanitarian initiatives, and Cultural events and exhibitions. These types are specifically focused on as the paper concentrates on Morocco as a case study.

Within the second part, nation brand and nation branding, Fan and Dinnie's definitions on nation brand are discussed with a focus on Dinnie's definition. Anholt's Competitive identity is applied in nation branding. Fan's model and Dinnie's framework with an extension of two new elements are applied for understanding how a nation branding is built and promoted. This part concluded with Simon Anholt's Competitive Identity framework, highlighting three pivotal components: strategy, substance, and symbolic actions. In the third and final part, an exploration of cultural diplomacy as a dimension of nation branding underscores the significance of culture in shaping a nation's brand and reputation. This aligns with Anholt's hexagon theory.

Power Theory. The concept of power is a highly debated and multifaceted topic that has been examined by scholars from various disciplines, including political science, economics, sociology, and others. Understanding the complexities of power is crucial for gaining insight into the dynamics of human interactions, relationships, and organizations, both at the individual and collective levels. However, it's important to note that the definition of power is a subject of contention in the field of political science, and there is no universally agreed-upon definition. Despite this, the study of power remains essential for comprehending how it can be used by a country to achieve its objectives in the global arena.

One of the seminal and widely recognized definitions of power comes from the American political scientist and educator Robert Dahl. He argues that the existence of

unequal distribution of power among individuals is a persistent and fundamental aspect of human society. Dahl further explains his definition of power as 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do (Dahl, 1957).' Similarly, Hobbes describes power as 'Power simply is no more, but the excess of the power of one above that of another,' (Hobbes,1969) endorsing the view of Dahl that power is characterized by a relationship between two individuals, where one has more power over the other. On the other hand, Weber defined power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance." (Weber, 2002) Weber's definition highlights the importance of authority and the ability to achieve outcomes through control over resources, emphasizing the social relationship between actors.

When examining the three aforementioned definitions collectively, we notice that these renowned scholars' definitions predominantly emphasize the dynamics of power as centered around control, dominance, and the capacity to impose one's will upon others. However, it's essential to recognize that not all manifestations of power necessitate engagement in overt conflict. This acknowledgment underscores the presence of various tools and sources of power that enable individuals to exert influence without resorting to confrontational means. Unfortunately, in their concentration on control and dominance, these definitions overlook the subtler yet equally impactful dynamics encompassing attraction, persuasion, and influence.

For instance, returning to Dahl's definition, we can reframe it to include the idea that "A may exercise power over B not only by getting him to do what he does not want to do but also by influencing, shaping, or even determining his desires and preferences (Lukes, 2004)." This revised interpretation underscores the potential for power to operate through the influence of preferences and the ability to shape agendas in a more nuanced manner.

In this context, this paper will specifically direct its focus towards Nye's definition of power, as they offer a more comprehensive view of power that encompasses aspects

such as attraction, persuasion and influence. He defines power generally as "the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want" He outlines three methods to accomplish this: "threats of coercion ('sticks'), inducements and payments ('carrots'), and attraction that makes others want what you want" (Nye, 2008). His definition, with its focus on the ability to influence others, offers a more nuanced and relevant understanding of power, especially with regards to cultural diplomacy.

In the realm of international politics, the possession of "power" refers to the capacity to exert influence over others, thereby inducing them to engage in actions that they would not have pursued independently (Wilson, 2008). This understanding of power is widely acknowledged by scholars and commentators, who emphasize its significance within the domain of international relations and the ways in which states and non-state actors employ it to further their goals and interests (Wendt, 1992; Nye, 1990; Cox, 1981). This recognition has led to a distinction between two forms of power, namely "hard power" and "soft power" (Gray, 2011).

The American political scientist Joseph Nye, who coined these two terms, distinguishes between hard and soft power through the concept of preference formation. He posits that intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions play a crucial role in determining preferences, and these can be classified as soft power. On the other hand, the capacity to exert control through tangible resources such as military and economic strength is considered hard power. He defines hard power, which also referred to as "coercive power" or "command power", as the capability to change the behavior of others through the use of either threats ("sticks") or inducements ("carrots") (Nye, 2004; Nye, 2002). This is further supported by another scholar, Colin S. Gray, who defines hard power as the ability to purposely inflict pain or reward in the pursuit of influence, and identifies it with military and economic instruments of policy (Gray, 2011).

In contrast to coercive power, soft power is the capacity to persuade others to do what one wants (Wilson, 2008). Joseph Nye was the first to introduce this notion, in his book «Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power» that disputed the then-

prevalent view that the U.S. was in decline, and further applied and developed it in subsequent works (Nye, 2002, 2004, 2008). He emphasized that the United States was not only the most powerful nation in terms of military and economic strength, but also in a third aspect which he referred to as «Soft Power».

He describes soft power as the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. «When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced» (Nye, 2004). Nye also refers to soft power as «co-optive power» (Nye, 2004). According to Gray (Gray, 2011), Nye did not assert that he was the originator of the idea of soft power. Instead, Nye is recognized for his thorough and systematic presentation of the concept. However, the idea of using non-coercive means to influence others has been a part of human social interaction since the beginning of time.

A nation's soft power primarily rests on three resources: its culture, its political values, and its foreign policies. These resources are the assets that generate such attraction (Nye, 2004). Culture, while not the sole factor, stands as a primary resource for states to harness and fully employ their soft power abilities (Emrick, 2019). So if culture is a resource for soft power, how does a nation leverage its culture through soft power? One answer is through public diplomacy, which is presented as an official policy translating soft power resources into action (Gilboa, 2008). Public diplomacy can be the mechanism to deploy soft power (Cull, 2009).

Public diplomacy as a Mechanism to Deploy Cultural Diplomacy. The term public diplomacy, In its contemporary meaning, was allegedly coined in the mid-1960s by Edmund Gullion, a former American diplomat and Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He defines it as "(Public diplomacy) …deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one

country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications." (as cited in Cull, 2006)

Based on this definition, public diplomacy seeks to influence the opinions of people in another country and alter their perceptions about a nation by employing various methods. Many other definitions of public diplomacy align with this idea. For instance, Gyorgy Szondi supports this view, defining public diplomacy as the traditional means of government communication directed at foreign audiences to bring about changes in the 'hearts or minds' of the people (Szondi, 2008). Malone extends his definition by emphasizing the goal of influencing not only the general population but also their government. He describes it as direct communication with foreign peoples, aiming to impact their thinking and, ultimately, those of their governments. It involves activities such as sharing information, education, and culture (Szondi, 2008).

Public diplomacy functions as a strategic tool employed by governments to mobilize the soft power resources mentioned earlier, which include a nation's culture, enabling them to communicate with and attract the populations of foreign nations, unlike traditional diplomacy, which primarily focuses on state-to-state interactions. It does this by highlighting the country's culture, values, and policies in a way that is appealing and attractive through broadcasting, subsidizing cultural exports, arranging exchanges, and similar approaches. However, if these potential resources are not inherently attractive, then public diplomacy that simply broadcasts them will not be effective and produce soft power. In fact, it could have the opposite effect and make the country less appealing (Nye, 2008).

It's crucial to note that the effectiveness of public diplomacy depends on credibility, and its success is measured by whether you can change people's opinions, not by how much you spend on it or how impressive your materials are (Nye, 2008). To achieve this, sound public diplomacy has to reduce any appearance of propaganda and communicate "truthfully," all while respecting freedom of opinion and the critical voices of the foreign

public it aims to engage (van Doeveren, 2011). Nicholas J. Cull referred to this engagement as "listening". He emphasizes that listening and being open to being changed by an encounter is what makes soft power attractive and not only speaking (Cull, 2009).

The changing approach in public diplomacy necessitates that actors engage with foreign publics through two-way communication rather than the traditional one-way communication. This shift is a central component of the new framework known as 'new public diplomacy,' which emphasizes operating within the fluidity of the globalized network environment. This two-way communication approach aims to promote mutual understanding and create a situation where both the government and the foreign public gain some form of profit (van Doeveren, 2011).

Within this evolving landscape, the new public diplomacy has moved away from discussions centered on the language of prestige and international image to speak about soft power and nation brand. Another difference is we speak of a departure from the actor-to-people Cold War-era communication and the arrival of a new emphasis on people-to-people contact for mutual enlightenment, with the international actor playing the role of facilitator; and the move from targeted messaging to building relationships with the foreign publics. The aim of managing the international environment remains consistent in both (Cull, 2009).

Nicholas J. Cull, a professor at the University of Southern California and a leading scholar and practitioner of public diplomacy, proposed a framework for the new public diplomacy, which consists of five elements that capture the different aspects and functions of the new public diplomacy. These elements are: listening, that we have covered earlier, advocacy, exchange diplomacy, international broadcasting, and finally cultural diplomacy, which is the main focus of this paper. However, some scholars disagree with Cull's view that cultural diplomacy is an element of public diplomacy. They contend that cultural diplomacy is generally distinct from public diplomacy, which encompasses a whole range of other activities related to advancing state interests abroad.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper I maintain that cultural diplomacy is indeed a core element and specific type under the umbrella of public diplomacy, since it involves the use of culture as a resource of soft power and a tool to communicate with foreign publics and influence their perceptions and attitudes towards the actor. Therefore, cultural diplomacy is regarded as one of the most influential tools, or "the linchpin" of public diplomacy as termed by the U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State , 2005), and its importance grows bigger and bigger in the 21st century to the extent that it has been seen as a subset of the practice of public diplomacy and not a part of it (Mark, 2009). To gain a clear understanding of how culture serves as "the linchpin" of public diplomacy, the paper will now delve into the discussion and definition of cultural diplomacy.

*Cultural diplomacy and its Instruments***.** Cultural diplomacy is a relatively new concept in the field of diplomatic and international relations, even though culture has always been an important factor in these areas. The term is frequently used by various actors, such as politicians, diplomats, scientists, and media experts, but its meaning is still vague and ambiguous (Kamali-Chirani, 2021). This lack of clarity poses a challenge for understanding and practicing cultural diplomacy effectively. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the definitions, dimensions, and instruments of cultural diplomacy.

When exploring the literature about the definition of cultural diplomacy, it becomes evident that no single definition has been universally agreed upon. Different definitions offer varying points of view and nuances. Some definitions emphasize cultural diplomacy's role in promoting mutual understanding among nations, fostering exchange of ideas, and facilitating dialogue. Others highlight its strategic significance in enhancing a country's global presence and visibility, underlining the use of culture as a tool for achieving political, economic, and diplomatic objectives.

As we delve further into the dimensions of cultural diplomacy, it becomes apparent that it encompasses a multifaceted approach. It involves not only the exchange of cultural elements but also the management of the international environment through cultural

resources. Cultural diplomacy operates at the intersection of politics, economics, arts, education, and more. It extends beyond traditional diplomacy to encompass a wide range of actors, including governments, non-state organizations, and individuals, who play pivotal roles in shaping international perceptions and relationships through cultural engagement. In order to provide a clear overview of these diverse definitions and their key points, the *Table 1* summarizing the main perspectives and their respective sources.

For the purpose of this paper, I define cultural diplomacy as the activity of communicating of an actor's (it could be a state, non-state organization, individual) cultural attributes, expressions, , achievements, and values with a foreign audience, through various channels and outlets of culture and media such as: films, books, sport events, exhibitions, performances, festivals, educational programs, language teaching, broadcasting, gifts, promotion of ideas or social policies, history, religious diplomacy, etc, and seeking feedback, for the purpose of achieving a desired outcome, such as promoting a positive nation's brand, building trust, understanding, and cooperation. The details of the definition are illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Cultural Diplomacy definitions by different scholars[3]

| Author (Source)	Summary of Definition	Key Points
Milton Cummings (2003)	Cultural diplomacy is the exchange of ideas, information, art, and culture among nations to foster mutual understanding.	Emphasizes the exchange of ideas, art, and culture as a means of promoting mutual understanding.
John Lenczowski (2011)	Cultural diplomacy is the use of various cultural elements to influence foreign publics, opinion makers, and foreign leaders, including art, education, history, religion, commerce, and more.	Highlights a wide range of cultural elements for influencing and engaging foreign audiences.
Brian J. Hurn & Barry Tomalin (2013)	Cultural diplomacy is a means for a country to increase its global visibility and gain political and economic influence by showcasing its culture, traditions, lifestyle, and arts.	Focuses on the strategic aspect of cultural diplomacy in enhancing a country's global presence.
Nicholas J. Cull (2009)	Cultural diplomacy is an actor's attempt to manage the international environment by making its cultural resources and achievements known overseas and facilitating cultural transmission abroad.	Emphasizes cultural resources and achievements as tools for managing the international environment.
Simon Mark (2009)	Cultural diplomacy is the deployment of a state's culture in support of its foreign policy goals or diplomacy.	Highlights the integration of culture into foreign policy objectives and diplomatic efforts.
Richard Arndt (as cited in Zamorano, 2016)	Cultural diplomacy takes place when governments pay attention to the complex field of culture to serve their elusive 'national interest.'	Stresses the role of governments and the complexity of cultural diplomacy in serving national interests.

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[3] Compiled by the author
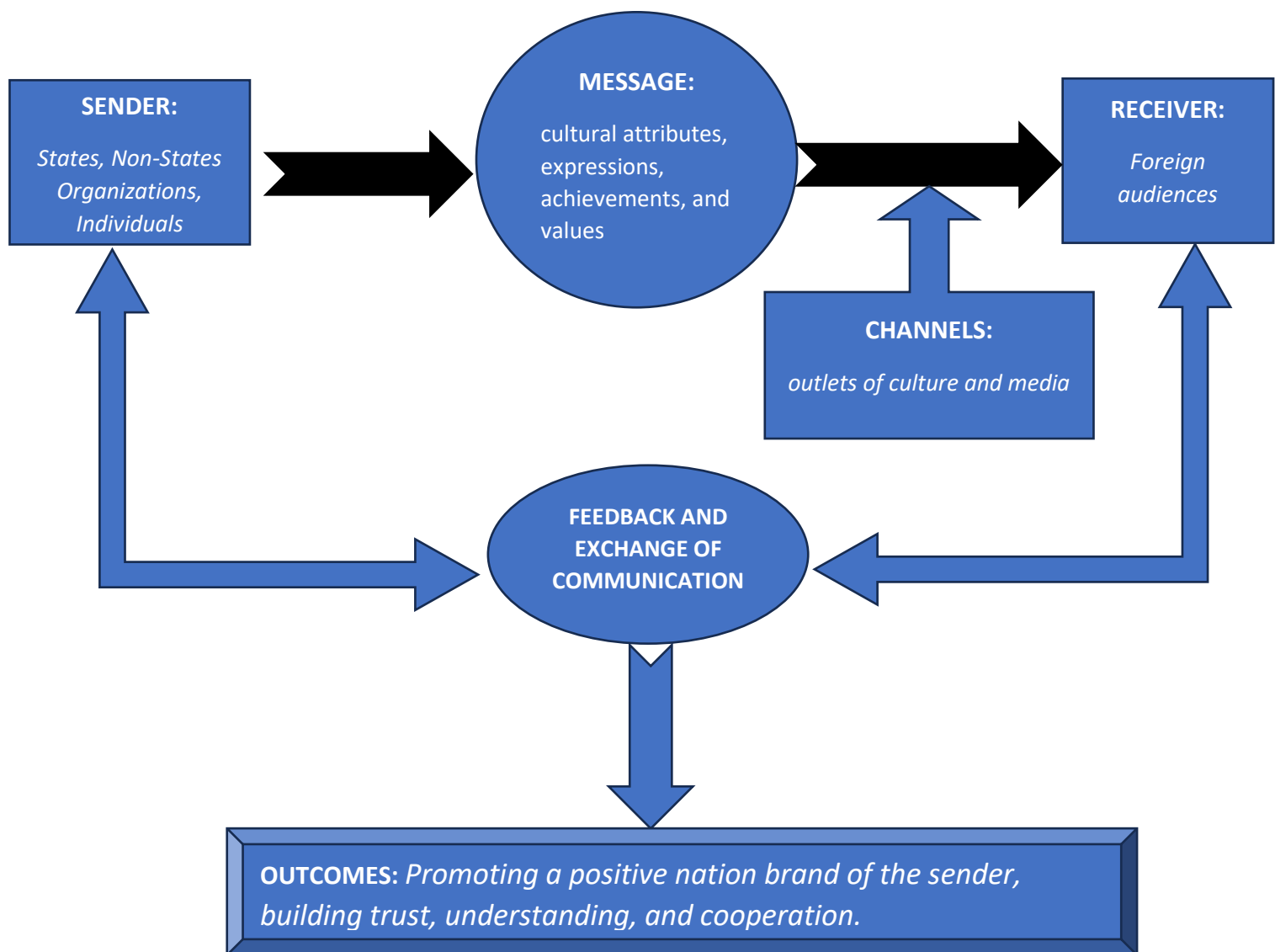
Figure 3 - Cultural diplomacy diagram based on the author's definition[4]

Cultural attributes encompass the distinguishing elements that set one culture apart from others, representing the commonalities shared by its people, including language, clothing, cuisine, and traditional customs. Cultural expressions serve as outlets for a culture's creativity and identity, encompassing art, music, dance, literature, and even non-

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[4] Compiled by the author

verbal gestures. Cultural achievements highlight the significant contributions a culture has made to humanity, which can span a wide range, from inventions and scientific discoveries to architectural wonders, artistic masterpieces, and even sporting triumphs. Meanwhile, cultural values encompass the shared beliefs, principles, and ethical standards that serve as guiding principles for a culture's behavior and interpersonal interactions. These values can include concepts like family, honor, freedom, or respect, shaping the ethos of the culture and the values its members hold dear.

It is important to note that within this definition, feedback from the receiver – whether it be a foreign audience or foreign leaders and decision-makers – is of paramount importance. This feedback reveals how the foreign audience perceived the message, whether their response was positive or negative. If the feedback is negative, it allows the sender to adapt and refine the message for better reception. Additionally, feedback can significantly influence the outcomes of this process, indicating the level of satisfaction, agreement, or disagreement of the receiver with the sender's message. This concept aligns with Nicholas J. Cull's notion of "listening" mentioned earlier in this paper. Therefore, it is not the case that a message sent by the sender without receiving feedback is without value; rather, feedback provides a valuable opportunity to enhance and improve the cultural diplomacy process.

Cultural diplomacy employs various instruments that that enable states to effectively communicate a nation's cultural attributes, expressions, achievements, and values to foreign audiences. These instruments serve as channels and outlets for cultural engagement, spanning activities such as films, books, sports events, exhibitions, performances, festivals, educational programs, language teaching, broadcasting, gifts, promotion of ideas or social policies, history, religious diplomacy, and more.

The impact of these tools on a nation's brand is substantial, significantly influencing how the nation is perceived globally. A positive and appealing representation of a country's culture generates soft power, establishing a connection with foreign audiences that leads to a shared understanding and respect. Furthermore, the strategic

deployment of these instruments contributes to shaping international opinions about a country's policies and values.

Building on this, a positive nation brand built through cultural diplomacy can result in increased tourism, foreign investment, and diplomatic influence, as we will delve into further when examining the tools utilized by Morocco in its cultural diplomacy endeavors in the next chapter. This positive image also creates a reservoir of goodwill that proves crucial during challenging times, fostering global cooperation and support.

For instance, educational and language programs help enhance the soft power of a nation by fostering an understanding of its culture and language, thereby promoting positive perceptions. Religious diplomacy plays a role in shaping a nation's image by highlighting its values and beliefs, contributing to the overall brand narrative. Sport events serve as a universal language, transcending cultural boundaries and fostering connections. Hosting cultural events and exhibitions acts as platforms for the exchange of ideas, fostering cross-cultural understanding and contributing to the nation's cultural diplomacy efforts.

As these instruments are strategically employed, they play a pivotal role in building and promoting a positive nation brand, enhancing trust, understanding, and cooperation on the global stage. The success of these tools in cultural diplomacy depends not only on their deployment but also on the authenticity and attractiveness of the cultural resources they convey. Ultimately, they shape the nation's soft power and contribute to its competitive identity in the realm of international relations.

2 Assessing the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy tools in enhancing the nation brand of Morocco

2.1 Methodology in assessing the Morocco's nation brand elements

The following section outlines this paper's methodology for answering the proposed research questions. Firstly, official documents, such as the King's speeches, government publications, official communiqués, press releases, reports, conclusions, and statements, are the primary sources for document analysis. This research adopts a qualitative method, specifically conducting a thematic analysis. By analyzing these primary source documents, we aim to understand how these cultural diplomacy tools are projected, their objectives, and their aims. Additionally, the documents offer details and statistics that contribute to our overall comprehension of the tools' impact and effectiveness. The selection criteria for primary sources focus on documents that specifically address the cultural diplomacy tools under analysis. These documents are sourced from official Moroccan websites and bodies, ensuring they are authoritative and relevant.

Secondary sources include interviews with officials (both Moroccan and from beneficiary countries), testimonials from beneficiary students, and analyses from media outlets, blogs, and scholarly articles. The selection of these sources is based on their relevance and the credibility of the source. Scholarly sources are prioritized to maintain academic rigor. For gathering official documents, data is sourced from official websites of ministries and other official bodies. For secondary data, relevant academic databases, reputable news sources, and institutional publications are used. Ensuring the reliability and validity of these sources involves cross-verifying information from multiple reputable sources.

Thematic analysis is used for its suitability in identifying and analyzing patterns of meaning within qualitative data. This method is particularly appropriate given its flexibility and cost-effectiveness in exploratory research (Herzog et al., 2019). Sources (both primary and secondary) are grouped by each cultural diplomacy group tools. Patterns are identified within each group, and the most highlighted codes are selected, focusing on key concepts. These codes are then grouped and identified as themes. No software is used; themes are manually highlighted by the author. Themes are identified based on the frequency and significance of codes. The coding process is iterative, allowing for refinement and re-coding as necessary.

To ensure reliability, the coding process is documented thoroughly, and a sample of the coding is independently reviewed to validate the themes. Ambiguous or conflicting data is noted and analyzed separately to understand the context and reasons behind the discrepancies. Efforts are made to triangulate these findings with other data sources to ensure robustness. Thematic analysis is chosen over other qualitative methods such as content analysis or discourse analysis due to its flexibility in handling diverse data sources and its effectiveness in exploring complex patterns and themes within qualitative data.

While conducting this research, several potential limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, interpreting content can be subjective, and different researchers might interpret the same text in different ways, leading to inconsistent results and reduced reliability. The author strives to make the research as objective as possible by using multiple sources for cross-verification, documenting the coding process thoroughly, and adhering to transparent criteria for data selection.

Additionally, analyzing large volumes of content can be time-consuming and requires significant effort, making it challenging to ensure thoroughness and accuracy. Developing and applying consistent coding schemes is also a challenge; inconsistencies in coding can lead to unreliable results. Due to these constraints and time limitations, this study focuses on only three cultural diplomacy tools. Each tool requires extensive time

for analysis, and narrowing the scope helps ensure a more manageable and detailed examination.

The thematic analysis helps identify the key cultural diplomacy tools used by Morocco and categorizes them, addressing the first research question. By categorizing these tools, the research then focuses on three specific tools for in-depth analysis. These tools are chosen as representative examples from each of the five groups of cultural diplomacy identified, and they are the most highlighted ones in Moroccan cultural diplomacy documents and sources. This deep analysis assesses the effectiveness of these tools in building and promoting the Moroccan nation brand, thereby addressing the second research question.

Cultural diplomacy employs various instruments that enable the state to communicate with foreign audiences and influence their perceptions and attitudes to achieve strategic objectives such as cooperation, mutual understanding, or enhancing a nation's image. Five types of cultural diplomacy tools are highlighted in the context of Morocco: education and language programs, religious diplomacy, philanthropy and humanitarian initiatives, sports, and cultural events and exhibitions. These tools are prominently featured in the analysis of Morocco's cultural diplomacy endeavors. The categorization of these types was determined by the author based on each tool's specific domain. However, three tools were chosen for deep analysis, notably: The Mohamed VI Institute of Training Imams and Preachers (hereinafter referred to as The Mohammed VI Institute) Hosting International Students and Participating in Sport Mega Events with a Focus on the last Morocco's participation at the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

Table 2 - Moroccan Cultural Diplomacy Instruments[5]

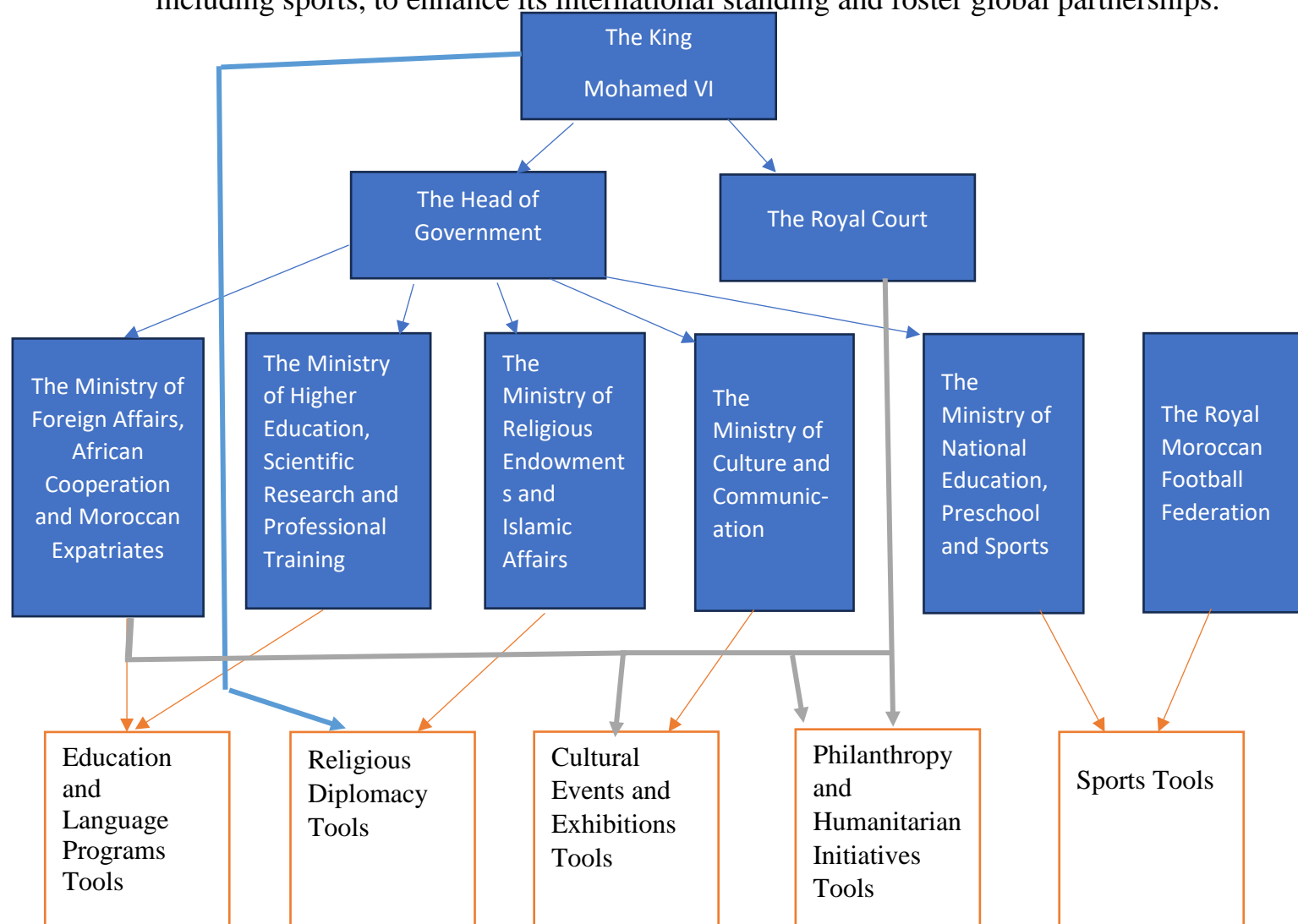| Type	Examples
Education and Language Programs	Scholarship grants by the Moroccan Agency for International Cooperation (AMCI), Arabic language & Moroccan culture teaching to diaspora's children, academic, professional, and student exchange programs, hosting international students in higher education institutions.
Religious Diplomacy	The Mohammed VI Institute for Training of Imams and preachers, the Mohammed VI Foundation for African Oulema (Muslim religious scholars), Mosque constructions and Quran donations, Restoration of places of worship within its territory (synagogues, cathedrals, and churches)
Sports	Hosting mega-events such as the FIFA World Cup 2030 in a joint bid with Spain and Portugal, Hosting the African Cup of Nations 2025, The outstanding participation in the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, and The Meeting International Mohammed VI d'Athlétisme de Rabat.
Philanthropy and Humanitarian Initiatives	Humanitarian aid during crises and natural disasters in Western African countries (such as: the establishment of military hospitals, the provision of food, medical assistance), COVID-19 medical assistance program for 15 African nations, Donation of fertilizers to Gabonese farmers to support agriculture, Knowledge sharing and expertise contribution to West African sectors.
Cultural Events and Exhibitions	Marrakech International Film Festival, Mawazine Rythmes du Monde music festival, Other Moroccan festivals promoting internationalization and openness. Museums and art exhibitions organized by the National Foundation for Museums (FNM), in collaboration with prestigious institutions, A renewed focus on African art and history.

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[5] Created by the author

However, before proceeding with this analysis, it is crucial to understand the mechanisms of cultural diplomacy in Morocco and identify the decision-makers involved. Figure 4 offers a structured view of Morocco's cultural diplomacy framework. It underscores the pivotal role of the King who exerts comprehensive authority over the cultural diplomacy tools, either directly or via his Advisors at The Royal Court. This centralized power is particularly pronounced in religious diplomacy, reflecting the King's significant role as the 'Commander of the Faithful' in shaping Morocco's religious outreach.

The diagram also illustrates the supportive role of The Head of Government and The Royal Court, which are connected to various ministries responsible for implementing cultural diplomacy strategies. These ministries, each overseeing specific areas such as education, religion, culture, and sports, operate under the guidance of the King's directives. The color-coded connections in the diagram—purple for the King's direct authority, green for the support roles, and orange for the ministries' control over their respective sectors - visually represent the hierarchy and interplay of influence within Morocco's cultural diplomacy.

Figure 5 delineates the entities responsible for generating soft and hard power in Morocco, it is evident that soft power is the primary focus as it is the focus of this research. This is reflected in the numerous ministries involved in its dissemination, including those of Foreign Affairs, Higher Education, Industry and Trade, Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Culture and Communication, National Education, Preschool, and Sports. These ministries collectively contribute to Morocco's soft power through various initiatives that promote the nation's cultural, educational, and religious values. In contrast, hard power in Morocco is centralized under the Minister Delegate to the Head of Government, who oversees the National Defense Administration. This indicates a more streamlined approach to the nation's defense and security strategies.

Public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy are mechanism to deploy soft power, with public diplomacy encompassing all the ministries mentioned, while cultural diplomacy

excludes the Ministry of Industry and Trade but includes The Royal Moroccan Football Federation. This suggests a strategic approach to leveraging Morocco's cultural assets, including sports, to enhance its international standing and foster global partnerships.

Figure 4 - The actors of cultural diplomacy tools in Morocco[6]

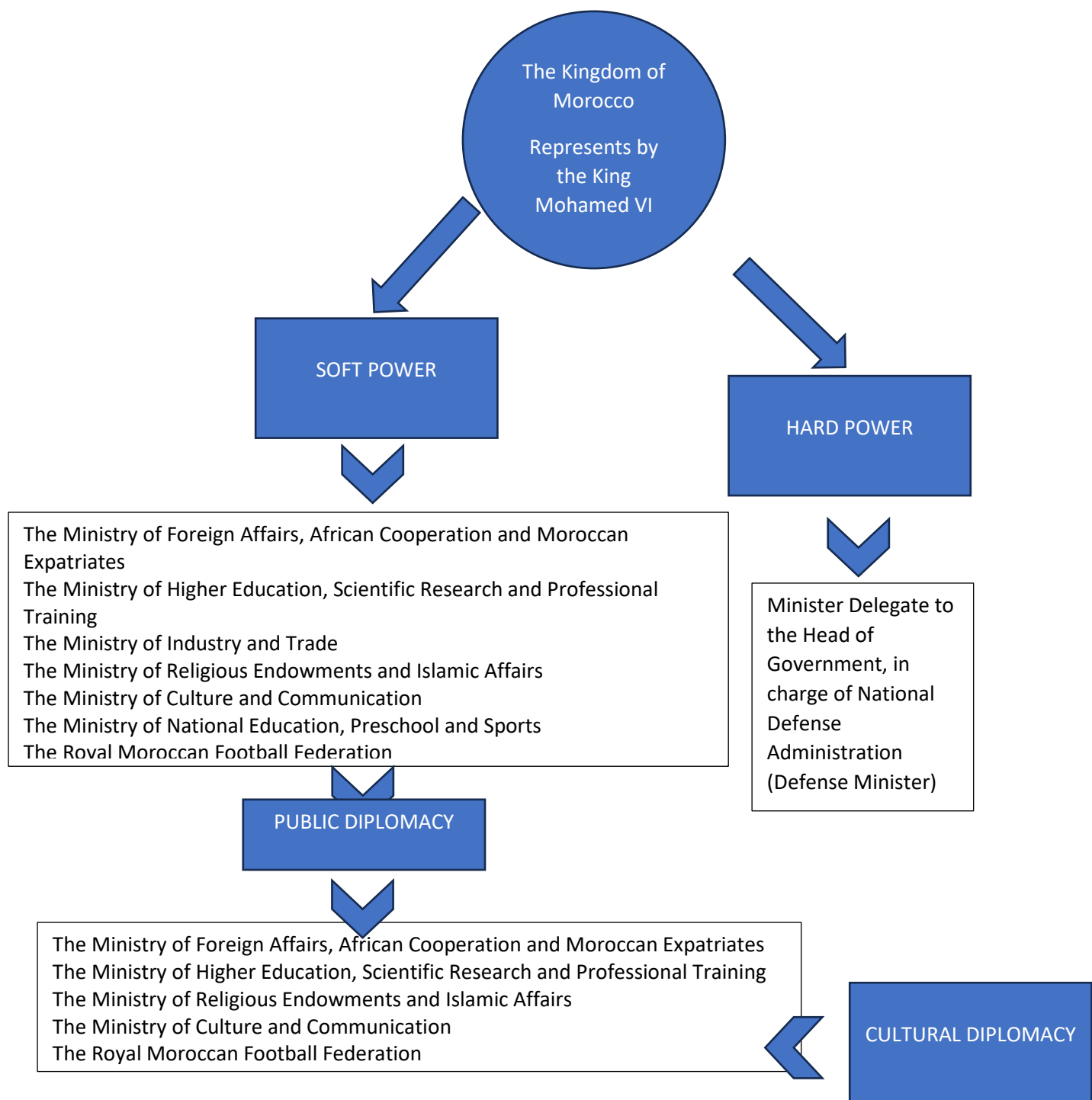
[6] Compiled by the author

Figure 5 - The actors of soft power and hard power in Morocco[7]

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[7] Compiled by the author

2.2   Moroccan Cultural Diplomacy Tools

Hosting International Students. In the analysis of the data pertaining to hosting international students in Morocco, three significant themes have emerged, shedding light on the evolution and impact of this crucial tool of cultural diplomacy. These themes provide insights into the diverse factors influencing the influx of international students, the strategic initiatives undertaken to enhance the internationalization of Moroccan higher education, and the broader implications of educating future African leaders and ambassadors of Moroccan education and culture. Specifically, the themes are as follows:

–   Theme 1: The Rise of International Students in Morocco

–   Theme 2: The Internationalization of Moroccan Higher Education through the AMCI Scholarships

–   Theme 3: Educating Future African Leaders and Ambassadors of Moroccan Education and Culture

Through an in-depth examination of these themes, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics driving Morocco's efforts to attract and educate a diverse cohort of international students, particularly from African nations. This section delves into the quantitative data, qualitative insights, and strategic initiatives that underpin Morocco's endeavors to strengthen its position as a regional hub for higher education and a beacon of cultural exchange.

The Rise of International Students in Morocco. Morocco's international student population increased from 8,604 in 2010 to 25,250 in 2023, marking a 193% evolution. This growth in international student enrollment spans public institutions such as universities and faculties, private higher education, and executive training programs (formation des cadres). These sectors serve as the primary avenues for international students pursuing higher education in Morocco. These international students are classified

into three groups: those who have arrived from abroad to pursue studies in Morocco, the children of foreign diplomats stationed in the country, and the children of foreign migrants.

Public higher education institutions have shown a consistent upward trend in hosting international students over the past six years. In contrast, private higher education and executive training programs have experienced fluctuations in enrollment numbers (see Figure 6 below). Specifically, international student enrollment in public higher education rose from 11,439 in 2017 to 14,463 in 2023, representing a 26.4% increase. Private higher education observed an increase from 1,151 in 2017 to 1,566 in 2023, marking a 36 % growth. Meanwhile, executive training programs saw a rise from 7,713 in 2017 to 9,223 in 2023, indicating a 19.55 % increase.

Three key factors contribute to the increase in international students in Morocco. Firstly, the Moroccan government's provision of scholarships through the International Cooperation Moroccan Agency (AMCI) is a primary catalyst. These scholarships are available to students pursuing studies in public higher institutions, including vocational training centers. The Moroccan government establishes cooperation agreements with other countries through AMCI, granting an annual quota for their students. This quota may be subject to adjustment based on mutual agreements between the parties involved. The scholarship package includes a monthly stipend of 1500 MAD (approximately 14,000 RUB) disbursed every two months, along with complimentary accommodation, medical coverage, and flight tickets.
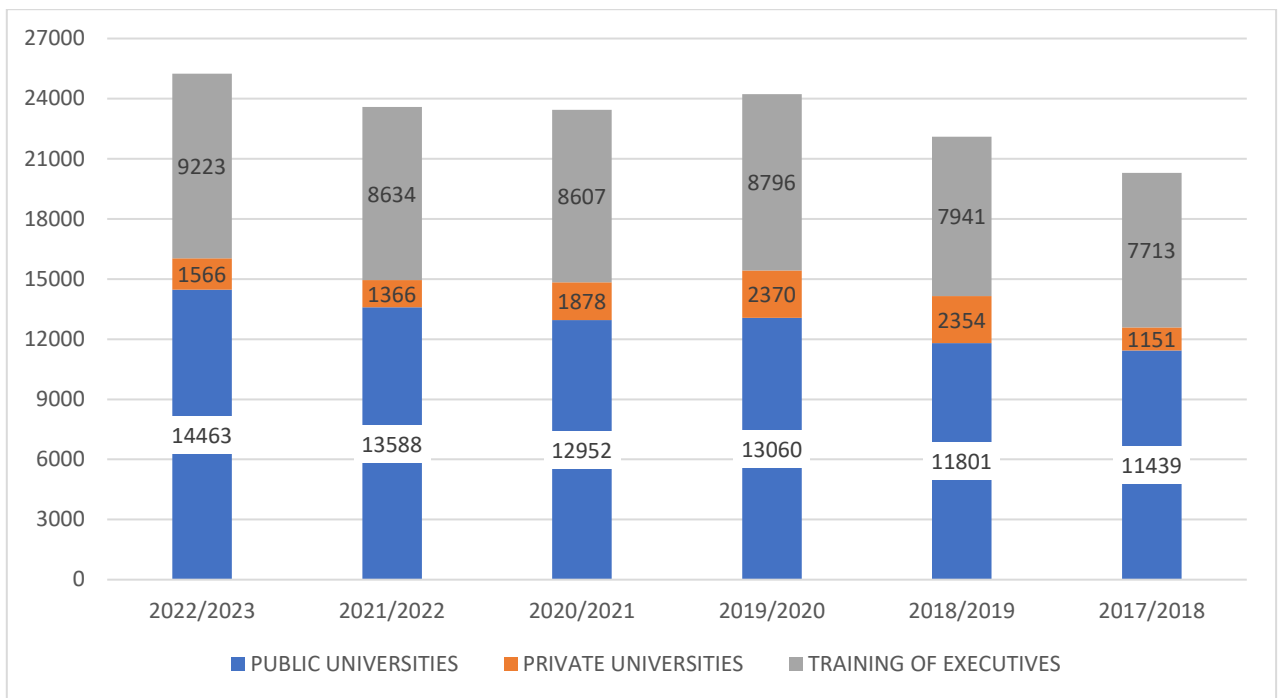
Figure 6 - Number of students enrolled in Moroccan higher education from the academic year 2017-2018 to 2022-2023[8]

Secondly, the predominant language of instruction, French, plays a pivotal role. Many technical and scientific disciplines are taught exclusively in French, making proficiency in the language a prerequisite for higher education in Morocco. Recipients of scholarships from non-French-speaking countries are required to undergo a one-year French language program at designated centers such as Alliance Française in their respective home countries before starting their studies in Morocco. Alternatively, some students fulfill this requirement at the International University City (CUI) in Rabat, although availability is limited due to capacity constraints.

For many African students, particularly from sub-Saharan French-speaking nations, Morocco is a preferred destination for fields like medicine, pharmacy, engineering, architecture, commerce, tourism, mathematics, and IT. Others view Morocco as a viable

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[8] Compiled by the Author

alternative due to the limited availability of scholarships for studying in France, a nation that tops the list for hosting sub-Saharan students.

Thirdly, the perceived quality of education and career opportunities upon graduation serve as significant factors. Graduates, especially those from sub-Saharan countries, are attracted by promising career prospects upon returning home. Many graduates from elite Moroccan faculties secure lucrative employment opportunities upon their return to their respective countries.

From 2012 to 2023, Morocco has shown a steady increase in hosting international students in public higher education institutions, rising from 8,938 to 14,463, marking a 61.8 % growth trajectory, as illustrated in Figure 7 below. This growth has been characterized by several notable trends and milestones. For instance, there was a significant rise between the academic years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017, where the number of enrolled international students increased from 9,347 to 11,173, representing a 19.5 % increase. Another peak was observed in 2019/2020 with an enrollment of 13,060 students, followed by a slight decline during the 2020/2021 academic year to 12,952. Despite this minor setback, the upward trend resumed, culminating in the highest recorded enrollment of 14,463 students in 2022/2023
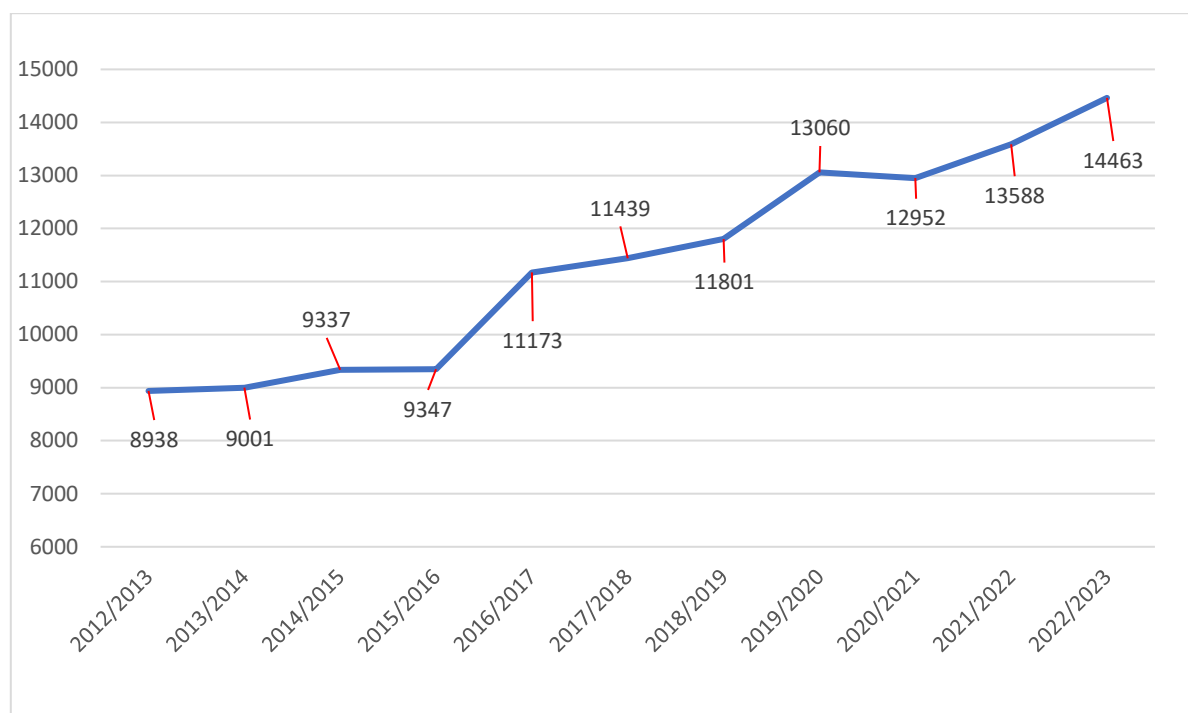
Figure 7 - The evolution of international students who enrolled in public higher education in Morocco from 2012 to 2023[9]

In the academic year 2021/2022, international student enrollment in public higher institutions included 13,588 students, with African students comprising 72.44% of the total, Asian students 12.58%, and European students 4.53%, as illustrated in Figure 8 below. Specifically, African students represented 9,843 individuals, with 8,954 hailing from sub-Saharan Africa, constituting approximately 90.96% of the total. A significant portion of these African students are beneficiaries of AMCI scholarships.
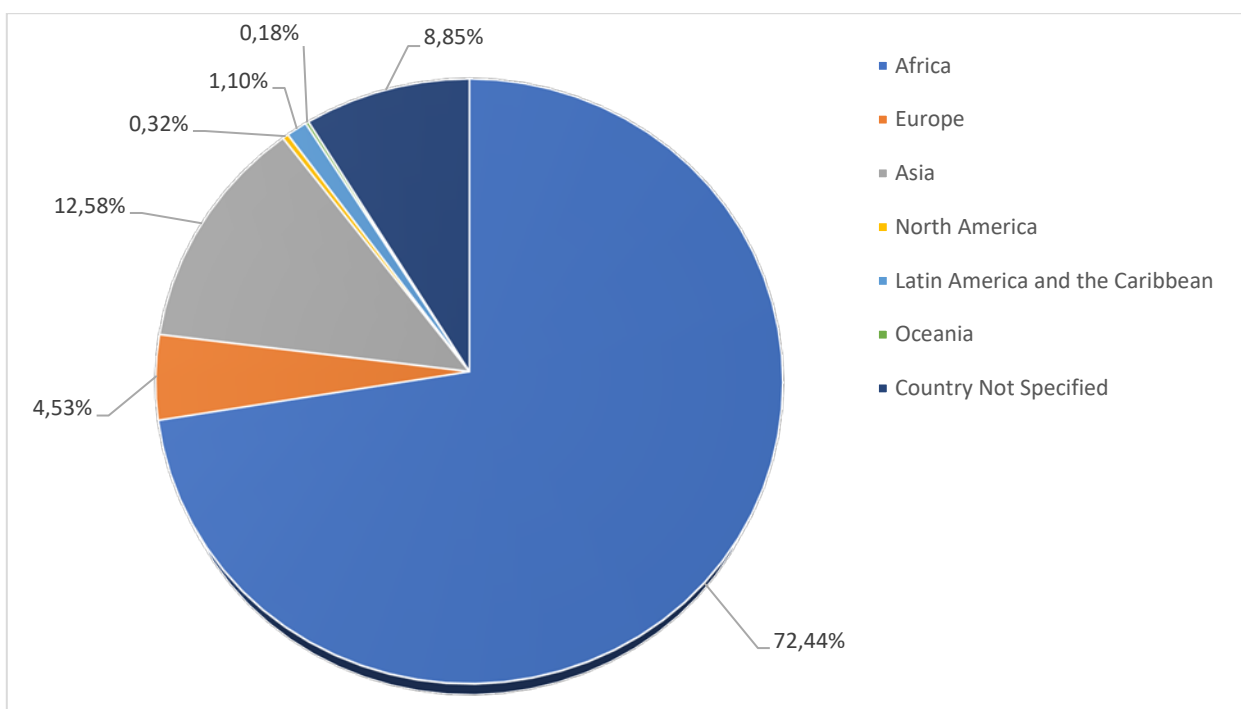
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[9] Compiled by the Author

Figure 8 - Students Enrolled in Public Higher Education Institutions in the Academic Year 2021/2022, Categorized by Continent[10]

The internationalization of Moroccan higher education through the AMCI scholarships. The internationalization of Moroccan higher education has been significantly supported by the AMCI scholarships, which have played a key role in attracting a diverse body of international students. The data indicates a strategic emphasis on African nations, with Morocco granting a substantial number of scholarships to students from countries such as Comoros, Senegal, Guinea, and Gabon, among others, as illustrated in Table 1 below, which showcases the most beneficiary countries of AMCI scholarships across different continents. This focus aligns with Morocco's foreign policy objectives and its commitment to South-South cooperation.

Table 3 - Countries with the Highest Number of Scholarship Beneficiaries from the AMCI[11]

BENEFICIARY COUNTRY	NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED	ACADEMIC YEAR	DETAILS
Comoros	230	Annual quota	Scholarships in academic and technical fields.
Senegal	230	2023-2024	Scholarships in academic and technical fields.
The Gambia	180	90 academic scholarships (annual quota) + 90 professional training scholarships over 3 years starting from 2024-2025 academic year (30 per year).	Professional training scholarships: For young trainees in initial training. Training levels and specialties defined by the Gambian Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science, and Technology. Annual quota: Scholarships in academic and technical fields. Furthermore, an agreement has been reached to expand the number of scholarships to 250. Of these, 80 additional scholarships will be specifically allocated for vocational training in Laayoune and Dakhla.
The Republic of Guinea	180	Annual quota	Scholarships in academic and technical fields.
Gabon	150	2023-2024	130 scholarships for university education and 20 for vocational training.
Mali	150	2023 - 2024	100 scholarships for graduate studies, 20 for Master's studies, 20 for doctoral studies, and 10 for specialization in Medicine.
Cote d'ivoire	150	Annual quota	Scholarships for Moroccan public institutions of higher, technical, and professional education. In 2020, 30 additional scholarships were announced for Ivorian students in the south of Morocco, namely in the city of Laayoune, in the fields of marine-related occupations, renewable energy, agriculture, and tourism.
Republic of central Africa	130	Annual quota	Undergraduate / graduate / postgraduate studies at public universities and higher institutes.
Benin	130	2024/2025 (it was 100 only 2023-2024 academic year)	80 places for university education and 50 places for professional training.
Burkina Faso	120	2023-2024	100 scholarships for graduates of the 2023 session + 20 for Moroccan laureates and candidates specializing in medicine.
Siera Leone	105	2023-2024	55 academic scholarships, 30 vocational training scholarships, and 20 for students in training institutes in southern provinces.
the Republic of Equatorial Guinea	70	2024-2025	Undergraduate / graduate / postgraduate studies at public universities and higher institutes.
Cape Verde	60	Annual quota	Scholarships in academic and technical fields.

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[11] Compiled by the Author

Chad	50	2023-2024	Scholarships in academic, technical, and professional fields.
Kenya	20	2024-2025 (The academic year 2023-2024 was given only 10)	Distribution: 1 slot for medical studies, 4 slots for paramedical sciences, 4 slots for commercial and management science, 4 slots for engineering and technological sciences, 1 slot for architecture. Remaining 6 slots for areas of letters, law, science, or any professional training in Morocco.
Haiti	70	2023-2024	Undergraduate / graduate / postgraduate studies at public universities and higher institutes.
Saint Lucia	20	2024-2025	Undergraduate / graduate / postgraduate studies at public universities and higher institutes.
The OECS (Antigua and Barbuda, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.)	20	2024-2025	Undergraduate / graduate / postgraduate studies at public universities and higher institutes.
Yemen	100	It has started from 2022 after it was only 50 scholarships	Academic studies and vocational training.
Indonesia	30	2023-2024	Academic studies focusing on religious studies and related fields.
Mexico	10	2024-2025	Study areas: Medical studies, paramedical sciences, business and management sciences, engineering and technological sciences, agronomic and veterinary sciences, architecture, Arabic language and literature, Islamic studies, legal sciences.

In addition to its African-centric approach, Morocco has expanded its educational outreach to include countries from other continents, such as the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) comprising six countries and Haiti, as well as Asian countries like Yemen, Indonesia, and Mexico representing North America. This expansion of

scholarships to include diverse regions highlights Morocco's commitment to promoting international cooperation in education.

Educating Future African Leaders and Ambassadors of Moroccan Education and Culture. Investing in the education of international students, particularly African students, provides both short-term and long-term benefits for Morocco. Providing scholarships and access to faculties and institutions equips these students with a strong foundational education that benefits them personally and directly benefits their home countries. Many African countries, notably those in sub-Saharan Africa, send their top high school graduates (*baccalaureate*) to study in elite schools and institutions in Morocco due to its educational system and the good ties that Morocco holds with these countries.

The success of these efforts is evidenced by the significant number of public figures and ministers in various sectors from different countries such as Guinea, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Guinea Conakry, and Tunisia, among others, who were once students in Morocco. Their education has equipped them with valuable knowledge and skills and has made them informal ambassadors promoting the image of Morocco in their countries. Additionally, the presence of these alumni in key leadership positions serves as a testament to the quality of education and the opportunities offered by Moroccan institutions. Through their roles, they contribute to further strengthening bilateral relations, promoting cultural exchange, and facilitating cooperation in various sectors.

Moreover, studying in Morocco provides students with cultural immersion. Students are exposed to high academic standards and the rich tapestry of Moroccan culture, history, and society. They learn Arabic or French, engage with local customs, and experience the Moroccan way of life. This immersion fosters a deep appreciation and understanding of Moroccan values, which students carry with them long after their studies have concluded. They return to their countries not just as graduates, but as knowledgeable individuals about Moroccan culture, ready to share their experiences and insights.

The Mohamed VI Institute of Training Imams and Preachers. In analyzing the outcomes of The Mohamed VI Institute of Training Imams and Preachers, three key

themes emerge, shedding light on the multifaceted approach adopted by Morocco in shaping religious education and promoting moderate Islam:

- Theme 1: Promotion of Moderate Islam
- Theme 2: International Influence and Soft Power
- Theme 3: Educational Innovation and Curriculum Design

These themes encapsulate the Institute's endeavors to cultivate a global community of religious leaders grounded in the principles of moderation, while also extending Morocco's influence across continents and innovating religious education.

Promotion of Moderate Islam. The Moroccan approach to Islam is noted for its emphasis on modernity within the broader Islamic landscape. Analysis of the sources reveals that concepts of "Modern Islam," "Islam of the Middle," "Middle Ground of Islam," and "Moderate Face of Islam" are frequently referenced in relation to Morocco's teachings for imams and preachers at The Mohamed VI Institute. These terms generally signify a middle ground that avoids both excessiveness and shortcoming in the application of religious principles. In the Moroccan context, this moderation includes efforts to counter extremist interpretations of religious texts. The focus of moderate Islam includes tolerance, inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence between different religions.

The triad of Moroccan Islamic principles – Maliki jurisprudence, Ash'ari theology, and Sunni Sufism – under the stewardship of the Commander of the Faithful, shapes its moderate nature. Malikism is noted for its flexibility in adapting Islamic law to modern circumstances, fostering interpretations that avoid inflexible orthodoxy. It is widely practiced in North Africa and some sub-Saharan countries, with Morocco being considered the heart of Malikiya.

This type of Islam is taught within the Mohamed VI Institute for both Moroccan and international students. According to a professor at the Institute, the goal is to teach a modern and moderate form of Islam that promotes love and security in society. The

Moroccan interpretation of moderate Islam taught at the institute is structured around four foundational pillars, each contributing to a comprehensive religious ethos.

The First Pillar of the institute's teachings revolves around the Promotion of Universal Values, emphasizing the significance of tolerance, coexistence, love, peace, and dialogue within the framework of Islam. These values are actively integrated into the daily practices and teachings of the religion. Students from the institute affirmed that Islam promotes dialogue and peaceful cohabitation with different communities. They expressed their intent to advocate for peace upon their return to their respective countries, embodying the values of peace, love, fraternity, and tolerance instilled by the institute's teachings.

The Second Pillar of the Mohamed VI Institute addresses the challenge of combating extremism and radicalization. In addition to promoting values such as tolerance, coexistence, love, and peace, the Institute also aims to provide a protective barrier against extreme ideas. The Minister of Islamic Affairs and Endowments stated that the Institute's mission is to transform religious scholars into regulators of religious consciousness, safeguarding against ignorance, deviation, and extremism.

The program for training imams at the Institute has been recognized as 'pioneering,' as noted by the US State Department's 2009 report on terrorism. A French student expressed that 'Terrorism is not a religion; it's an ideology,' highlighting the need for multifaceted approaches beyond military force. Ideas, science, and a true understanding of Islam are presented as essential tools in countering extremist narratives. The Institute's commitment is to revealing an authentic face of Islam, untainted by extremist interpretations.

The Third Pillar of the Mohamed VI Institute centers around interfaith dialogue and the integration of other religious perspectives into its curriculum. Beyond Islamic teachings, the Institute fosters an understanding of other Abrahamic faiths, including Christianity and Judaism. The Institute's director emphasized this inclusive approach, stating that the imam training program aims to build a community of faithful for all

religions without discrimination. During a visit accompanying King Mohamed VI, this commitment was reaffirmed, with the Pope describing Morocco as a 'bridge between Africa and Europe,' highlighting Morocco's role in promoting a moderate Islam.

The Fourth Pillar highlights the role of women in Islam. The institute has included women as morchidates (woman preachers), empowering them to become spiritual guides and advocates for women's rights within the Islamic tradition. This initiative challenges extremist ideologies that marginalize women and promotes a more equitable society where women play a vital role in religious and community life. The institute's stance on women's roles in religious leadership is exemplified by the experiences of its students. An Ivorian participant joined the program after learning of its aim to cultivate social and religious influencers, especially women, reflecting the institute's potential to empower women as agents of change.

International Influence and Soft Power. Since the signing of the Monumentum between Morocco and Mali in 2013, aimed at training 500 imams in distinct groups, Morocco has garnered international attention for its comprehensive religious education program catering to imams and preachers from various continents including Africa, Europe, and Asia. This initiative has established Morocco as a notable authority in theological education, evident from the diverse student body that has passed through its doors. The institute's influence extends beyond geographical boundaries, with a total of 2,798 graduates from nine African countries enrolled since its inception in 2015 until the end of 2022, highlighting its commitment to cultivating a global community of religious leaders who embody the principles of moderate Islam.

Analyzing the institute's trajectory from its inception in 2015 to 2021 reveals an increase in demand from countries seeking to benefit from the Moroccan educational model for imams and preachers. This surge in demand necessitated three expansions of the institute's capacity, the latest being in 2017, to accommodate the growing interest from multiple nations. Concerning the enrollment statistics, Moroccan students at the institute

are capped at 250 individuals annually, with 150 designated as imams and preachers, and 100 as female preachers, as depicted in Figure 9 below.

An exception occurred in 2017, wherein an additional 100 individuals from military bases underwent a one-year program, which was not included in the data of graduated students. Additionally, gender distribution data for the same year was unavailable from the source. Each year's data includes students in their first or second year, as well as those enrolled in continuous programs lasting between 3 to 6 months, and in some cases, one year specifically designed for imams.
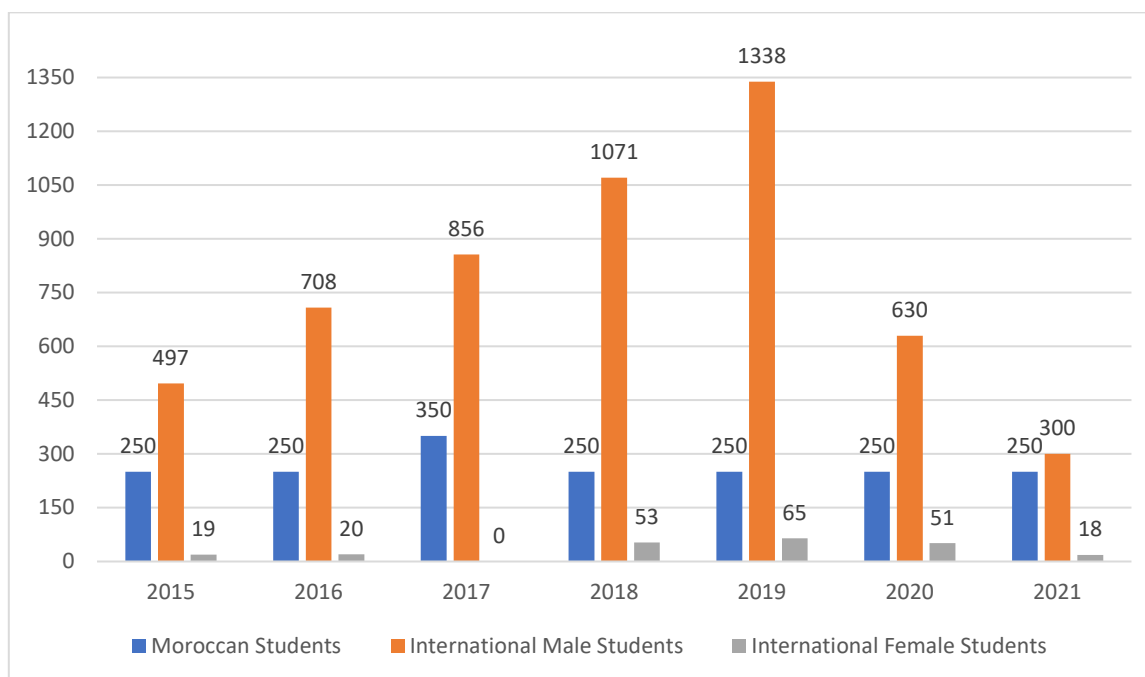

Figure 9 - Annual Enrollment Trends at the Mohamed VI Institute for Training Imams and Preachers (2015-2021)[12]

The data for the 105 Malian imams trained in 2013 and the 37 Tunisian imams trained in 2014 are not included in the analysis, as the institute had not been formally established at that time. Regarding the graduated students, Moroccan students consistently maintained a graduation rate of 250 each year. However, international students witnessed a significant increase, particularly in 2019, with a total of 644 graduates (both male and female), as depicted in Figure 10 below. The number of enrolled students does not always

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[12] Compiled by the Author

align with the number of graduates, as some dropouts occur, especially among male students, as highlighted by the institute's director.
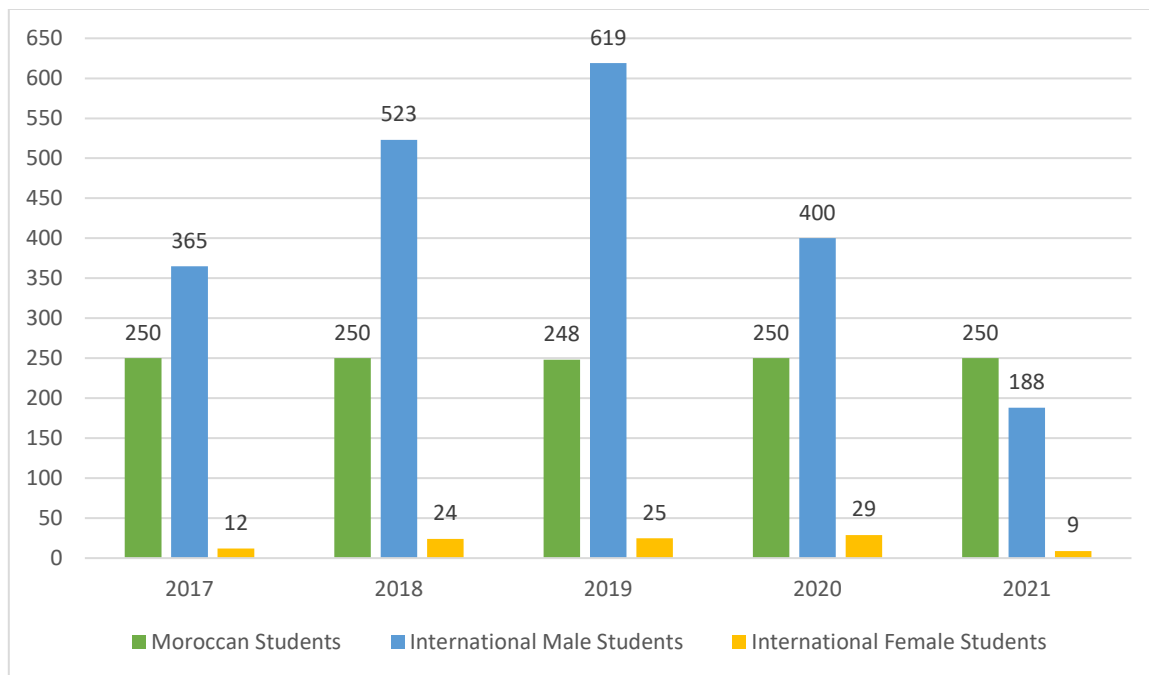

Figure 10 - Annual Graduation Trends at the Mohamed VI Institute for Training Imams and Preachers (2017-2021)[13]

The diversity of the student body from 2015 to 2021 is further highlighted in the distribution by continent. As shown in Figure 11 below, a significant majority of students, 92.27 % with a total of 5,191, were from Africa, reflecting the strong demand and close ties within the African continent. European students constituted 7.57 % with a total of 426, notably from two countries, France and the UK, indicating growing interest from Europe, while Asian students accounted for a smaller fraction of 0.16 % with 9 students only from Thailand. The numbers include both male and female students.

The institute's growth is accompanied by a commitment to constructive cooperation and strengthening ties of brotherhood, notably with African countries. In his speech at the inauguration of the Mohammed VI Foundation of African Ulema, The King highlighted the decision to create this institution alongside the Mohamed VI Institute, reflecting an

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[13] Compiled by the Author

integrated policy that responds to requests from sister African nations in the religious domain. The Moroccan Minister of Islamic Affairs further emphasized that these requests are officially expressed by Heads of State who share the same religious values with Morocco, indicating a rich tapestry of intercontinental collaboration.
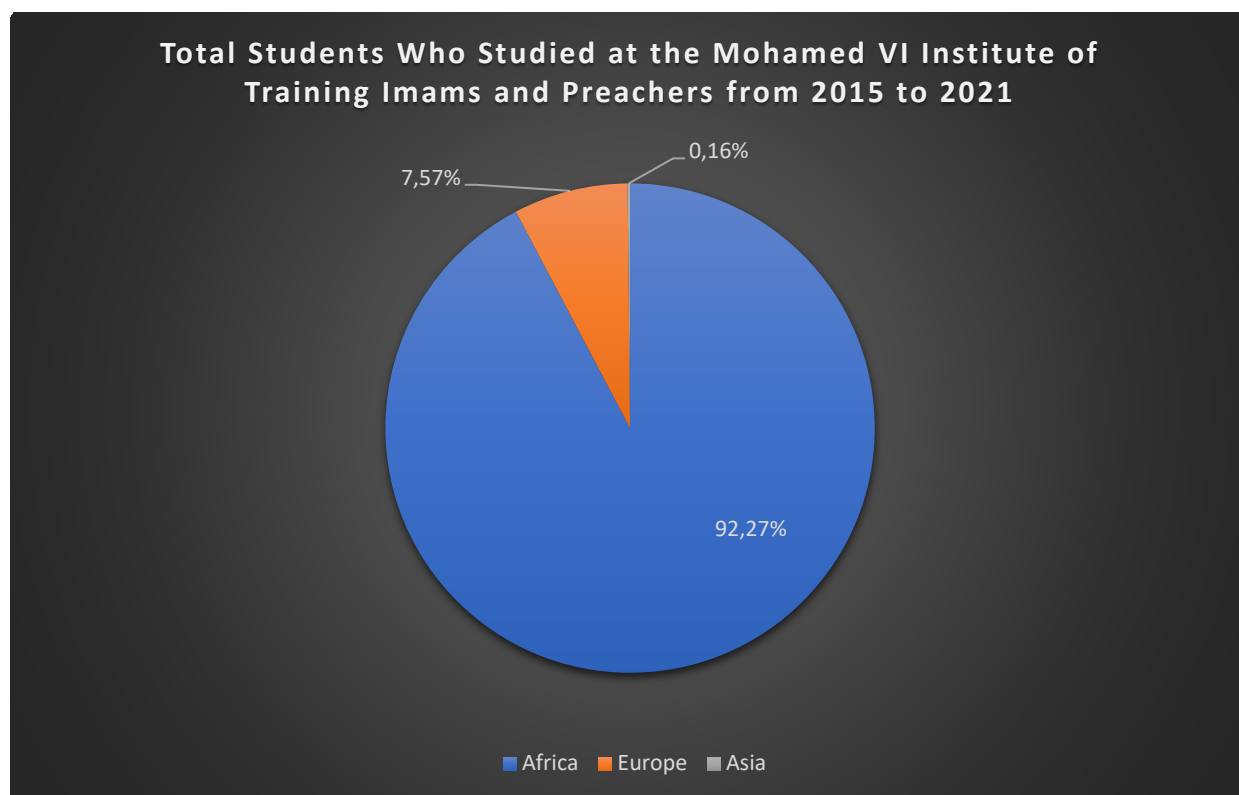
Figure 11 - Total Number of Students Enrolled at the Mohamed VI Institute for Training Imams and Preachers from 2015 to 2021[14]

Educational Innovation and Curriculum Design. The curriculum of the Mohamed VI Institute is a blend of Islamic and Human Sciences, augmented by vocational training. The Islamic Sciences component includes the study of the Quran, Sunnah, and the history of Islam, alongside specialized jurisprudence for leadership and women, aiming to foster a comprehensive understanding of the faith. The study of Arabic language and

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[14] Compiled by the Author

communication is included, as it is essential for effective preaching and outreach, being the official language of the Quran and for leading prayers.

In the realm of Human Sciences, the curriculum includes subjects like economics, mental health, and political institutions, with the goal of producing well-rounded leaders who can navigate the complexities of contemporary society. The inclusion of computer science and languages like French is intended to ensure that graduates are digitally literate and linguistically versatile, enhancing their ability to serve diverse communities.

A distinctive feature of the institute's educational model is the incorporation of vocational training. In addition to religious studies, the institute offers courses in various trades such as electricity, agriculture, sewing, and IT. This approach aims to equip students, including Imams and preachers, not only with spiritual guidance but also with practical skills essential for their roles in society.

For example, through IT training, students learn to utilize technology to spread the message of modern Islam beyond the confines of mosques. This emphasis on technology is intended to enable them to engage with a wider audience, including online platforms, and counter extremist ideologies. This aspect of the curriculum is particularly significant for African students, for whom vocational training is exclusively offered. It aims to ensure that upon returning home, they possess both spiritual and practical tools, providing economic stability and protecting them from the vulnerabilities of recruitment by extremist groups.

Additionally, the institute's adaptability is reflected in its curriculum design. The teaching is adjusted according to the needs and reality of the country of origin of each student. For instance, a French imam must master the principles of secularism in his country along with religious sciences. This flexibility is intended to ensure that the teachings are relevant and applicable, reflecting the unique context of each student's homeland. Furthermore, the teaching at the institute includes practical skills, such as preparing sermons, communicating effectively, and interacting with people, especially

young individuals. This approach aims to make graduates knowledgeable and capable of applying their learning in real-world contexts.

Participating in Sport Mega Events: The FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. In this segment, we will delve into the impact of Morocco's participation in the 2022 FIFA World Cup, highlighting three key themes that underscored the nation's involvement in this global event:

- Theme 1: Spreading the Moroccan Values
- Theme 2: Continental Pride and Unity
- Theme 3: Global Attention and Its Impact on The Tourism Sector

These themes encapsulate Morocco's cultural representation, the solidarity it fostered across continents, and the profound effects of its World Cup journey on global awareness and tourism.

Spreading the Moroccan Values. The Moroccan team's journey in the 2022 FIFA World Cup included significant displays of Moroccan cultural values. Data showed frequent interactions between players and their mothers after each match. These interactions, widely broadcasted, demonstrated the importance of familial bonds in Moroccan culture. The recognition of their mothers by the players illustrates the cultural norm of venerating maternal figures and elders, a fundamental aspect of Moroccan society.

Additionally, the team's public expressions of religious devotion, such as prostration (sujud) in gratitude, were consistently observed throughout the tournament. These actions, aligned with Islamic practices of humility and thankfulness, were frequently reported in the media. These gestures highlighted the spiritual aspect of Moroccan identity, providing clear instances of religious devotion integrated into the everyday lives of Moroccan players.

The impact of these cultural displays was evident in the increased search interest and positive media coverage about Morocco during the World Cup. Various metrics showed a significant surge in interest, indicating enhanced visibility and a more positive

portrayal of Morocco globally. Data indicated a measurable increase in global awareness and appreciation of Moroccan culture, driven by the team's conduct and the cultural values they showcased.

Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of articles and posts about the Moroccan team on the internet revealed that themes of overcoming the odds were present in 64 % of the content as illustrated in Figure 12. This analysis, based on 279,000 pieces of media content, identified a strong focus on the team's unexpected progression to the semi-finals. This achievement was frequently highlighted as a notable milestone and extensively covered across different media platforms, underscoring the team's resilience and determination.

The data showed that 32 % of the media coverage focused on family and cultural values, emphasizing the interactions between players and their families and their public religious practices. These aspects were consistently highlighted in media reports, underscoring the cultural norms and values that the team represented. Additionally, 4 % of the coverage highlighted the charitable actions of the Moroccan players and staff, specifically the donations made from their World Cup earnings to those in need. This

aspect of the coverage provided insight into the philanthropic activities associated with the team, reflecting another dimension of their off-field contributions.
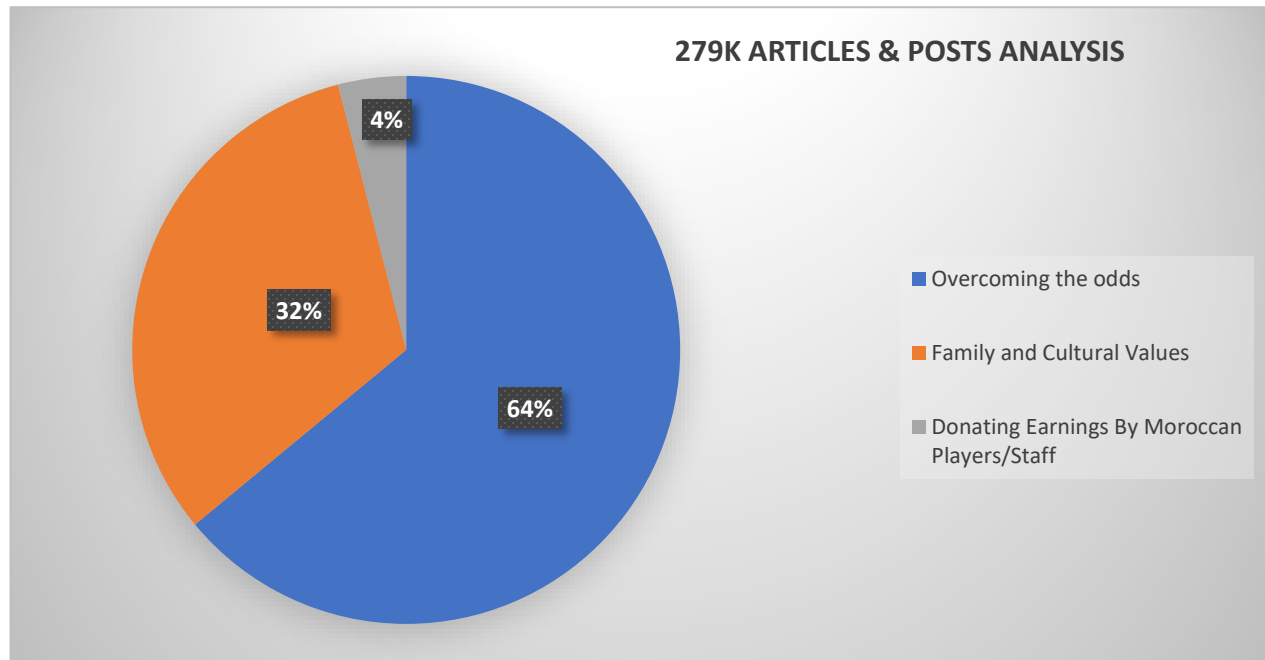

279K ARTICLES & POSTS ANALYSIS

- 4%
- 32%
- 64%

Legend:
- Overcoming the odds
- Family and Cultural Values
- Donating Earnings By Moroccan Players/Staff

Figure 12 - Analysis of 279k Articles and Posts on the last Morocco at the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Source: Data adapted from "CARMA, Morocco's World Cup Success Goes Far And Beyond Football. 2023[15]

Continental Pride and Unity. Morocco's participation garnered significant support, particularly from Pan-African, Pan-Arab, and Pan-Islam communities, although support extended beyond these groups. Data indicated that approximately 78 % of Africans felt that Morocco represented Africa well, as shown in Figure 13 (excluding Morocco's own data). The highest level of strong agreement came from Morocco itself, with 94 % of respondents expressing this sentiment. Senegal, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire each had 83 % of respondents strongly agreeing. Overall, there was a high level of agreement on the positive representation of the African continent by the Moroccan team. However, there was some variation in opinions across different countries, with Zimbabwe showing comparatively less support.
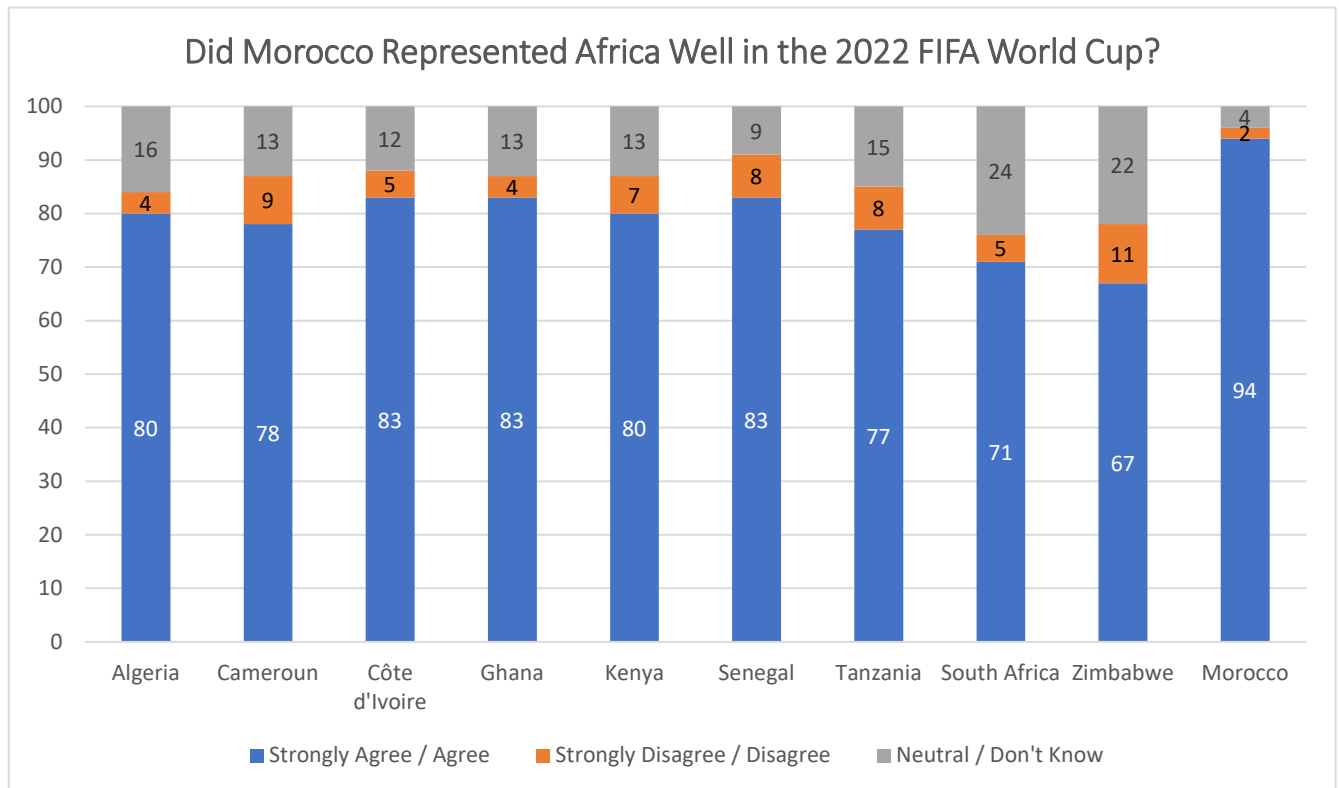
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[15] Modified by the author

Figure 13 - African Public Opinion on Morocco's Representation in the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Source: Data adapted from "Sagaci Research, Are African countries proud of Morocco in the World Cup 2022?"[16]

This support was evident among spectators present in Qatar, as well as those watching in cafés and homes in their respective countries. Members of the Turkish Parliament gathered to watch Morocco's victory over Portugal to reach the semi-finals, while fans in cafés in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and even Algerians, supported Morocco despite the tensions between the two countries over the Western Sahara dispute.

Global Attention and Its Impact on The Tourism Sector. During the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Morocco experienced a significant increase in global recognition, as evidenced by the spikes in Google search trends. Figure 14 illustrates the fluctuations in search interest for "Morocco" and related terms in three other languages: French ("Maroc"), Arabic ("المغرب"), and Spanish ("Marruecos") throughout the tournament.

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[16] Modified by the author

The data reveals that search interest peaked at different stages of the competition, particularly during Morocco's key matches. Substantial increases in search activity were recorded during the group stage matches against Croatia, Belgium, and Canada on November 23, November 27, and December 1, respectively; the Round of 16 against Spain on December 6; the quarter-finals against Portugal on December 10; the semi-finals against France on December 14; and the third-place match against Croatia on December 17. The highest search peak occurred during the semi-final match, underscoring the global attention Morocco garnered.

For instance, on December 6, search volumes for "Morocco," "Maroc," "المغرب," and "Marruecos" were 56, 45, 30, and 57, respectively. These figures highlight a broad international interest, with notable attention from Spanish-speaking regions as indicated by the high search volume for "Marruecos." On December 10, the search volumes for these terms reached 97, 53, 44, and 66, respectively, marking a significant global engagement during the quarter-finals. The peak occurred on December 14, with search volumes hitting 100 for "Morocco," 63 for "Maroc," 39 for "المغرب," and 79 for "Marruecos."
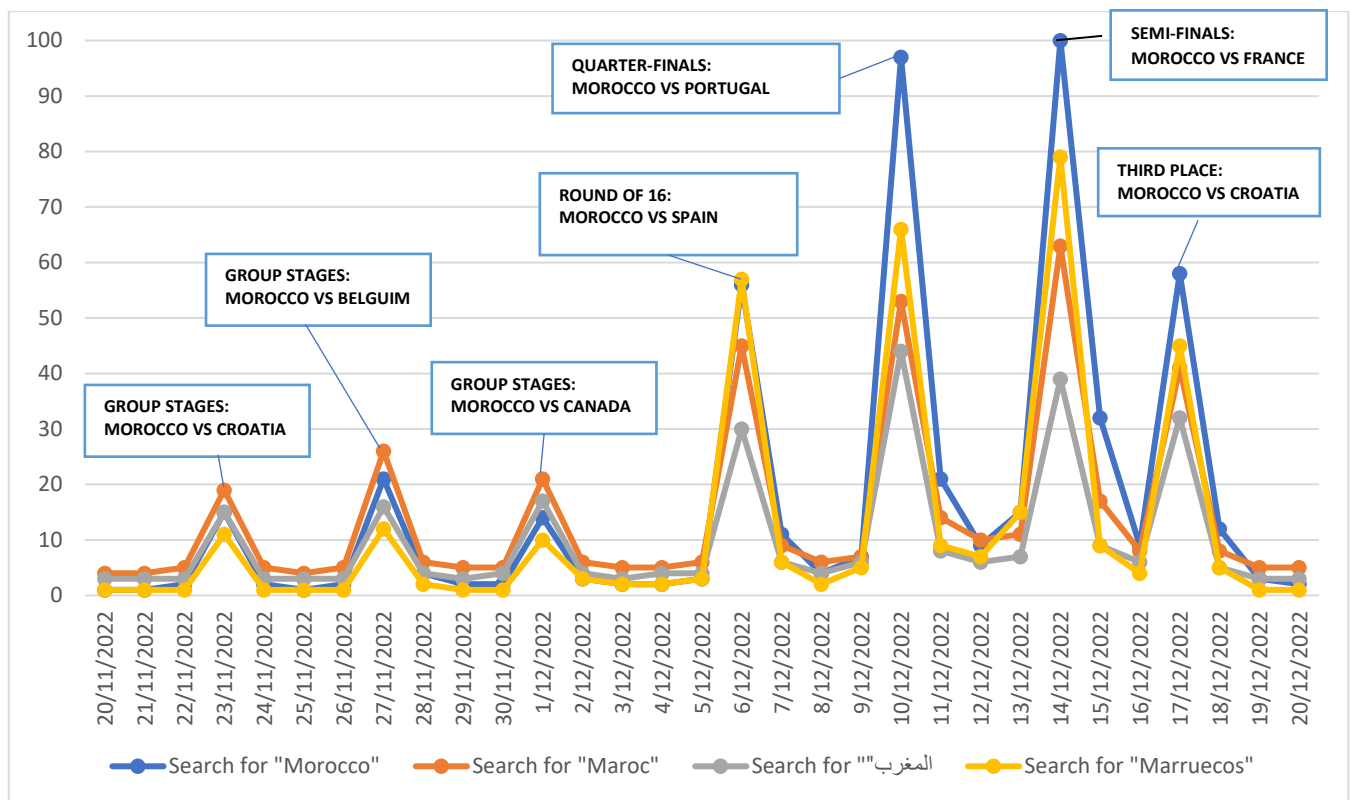
Figure 14 - Global Search Interest for "Morocco" and Related Terms During the 2022 FIFA World Cup[17]

In terms of traditional media coverage, a boost was observed similar to the case in Google search, as illustrated in Table 2 below. In the 40 days leading up to the World Cup, there were 5.3K media articles with a potential reach of 1.1 billion. During the World Cup, this figure surged to 20K articles, reflecting a 277 % increase in coverage, and the potential reach expanded dramatically to 6.4 billion. This spike in media attention is a testament to the heightened global interest as Morocco progressed through the tournament stages. Even in the 40 days following the World Cup, media coverage remained elevated with 6.5K articles, reflecting a 22.64 % increase compared to the pre-World Cup period, and a potential reach of 1.5 billion, indicating sustained interest in Morocco beyond the event itself.

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[17] Compiled by the author using Google Trends

Table 4 - Volume of Articles About Morocco Before, During, and After the World Cup Source: Data adapted from "CARMA, Morocco's World Cup Success Goes Far And Beyond Football. 2023"[18]

	Volume of Articles (K)	Potential Reach (B)
40 Days Before	**5.3**	**1.1**
During The World Cup	**20** (+277 %)	**6.4** (+481.8%)
40 Days After	**6.5** (+ 22.64 %)	**1.5** (+36.4%)

In terms of social media posts about Morocco's journey, there was a significant increase in engagement during the World Cup. As shown in the table, the volume of posts about Morocco rose dramatically from 1.4 million in the 40 days before the World Cup to 12.1 million during the event, marking a 764% increase. This surge highlights the widespread attention and excitement generated by Morocco's performance. Even after the World Cup, social media activity remained higher than the pre-event period, with 1.8 million posts, indicating a 29% increase. This sustained engagement reflects the lasting impact of Morocco's achievements on the global audience.

Table 5. Volume of Posts on Social Media About Morocco Before, During, and After the World Cup. Source: Data adapted from "CARMA, Morocco's World Cup Success Goes Far And Beyond Football. 2023"[19]

	Volume of Posts (M)	Increase Rate in %
40 Days Before	**1.4**	**-**
During The World Cup	**12.1**	**+764**
40 Days After	**1.8**	**+29**

Additionally, countless celebrities who are followed by millions of followers congratulated Morocco on their social media accounts, including the entrepreneur and billionaire Elon Musk, the singer Shakira, and Google's CEO Sundar Pichai, Bill Gates the founder of Microsoft. Additionally, notable figures and heads of state congratulated

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[18] Modified by the author
[19] Modified by the author

Morocco's King through phone calls, with leaders from Gabon, France, Qatar, Jordan, Mauritania, and the United Arab Emirates, among others, expressing their warmest congratulations.

Furthermore, the surge of online interest has led to a significant increase in searches related to visiting Morocco. Visits to Morocco.com rose by 99 %, while visitmorocco.com saw a 34 % increase, and Tripadvisor Morocco experienced a 154 % jump in traffic. This online curiosity translated into real-world action, with more tourists visiting Morocco after the World Cup. Many of these visitors had never heard of Morocco before or had not considered it as a destination until the team's impressive performance. This heightened interest resulted in a notable spike in hotel reservations, as reported by booking agencies.

3 Enhancing Morocco's cultural diplomacy strategy

The findings highlighted in Chapter 2 demonstrate the significant role that cultural diplomacy tools play in enhancing the nation brand of Morocco. By focusing on three specific tools - the Mohamed VI Institute, the hosting of international students, and participation in mega sport events, notably the FIFA World Cup - Morocco has strategically positioned itself as a leader in education, religious moderation, and sporting excellence. This chapter will discuss the impact of these tools on Morocco's nation brand and provide recommendations for further enhancing their effectiveness. Each tool will be discussed separately before aligning them.

Hosting International Students. The results on hosting international students as a key tool of cultural diplomacy indicate that Morocco leverages this approach by internationalizing its higher education system. This achievement primarily stems from providing scholarships to students from various continents, with Africa being the dominant recipient. This strategy aligns with Morocco's objective of strengthening its South-South cooperation, fostering collaboration and solidarity among developing countries in the Global South. This cooperation framework emphasizes mutual benefit, shared development goals, and collective self-reliance, focusing on the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge to address common challenges and promote sustainable development.

The data indicates a significant increase in international student enrollment in rising from 8,604 in 2010 to 25,250 in 2023. This growth highlights Morocco's commitment to becoming a regional hub for higher education, with public institutions experiencing the most substantial increase. This trend underscores the impact of government policies and scholarship programs, particularly those targeting African students. Several factors contribute to the growth in African student enrollment.

Firstly, Morocco's strategic investments in Africa have played a crucial role. Over the past decades, Morocco has made significant investments across the African continent, focusing on high-value sectors such as banking, telecommunications, energy, and mining among other sectors. These investments have positioned Morocco as a key player in Africa, competing with former colonial powers such as France, Belgium, Italy, and Spain. Despite Morocco's withdrawal from the African Union in 1984 due to the acceptance of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), the country continued to invest heavily in Africa, before it rejoined the organization on January 31, 2017. Morocco's win-win approach in its dealings with African neighbors has bolstered its image as a model for other African countries.

Secondly, Morocco provides substantial facilities and opportunities for African, particularly Sub-Saharan, students. This includes a significant number of scholarships compared to those offered to students from other continents, as detailed in Chapter 2. These scholarships, along with favorable conditions for studying and pursuing jobs in Morocco, make the country an attractive destination for higher education. Additionally, the opportunities for these students to find well-paying job opportunities upon their return to their respective countries further enhance the appeal of studying in Morocco. As noted by one student from this region, "a well-earned Moroccan degree amounts to rosy career prospects." (Koroma, 2018).

Thirdly, the predominant use of French as the language of instruction in Morocco's scientific and technical disciplines is a crucial factor. Many Sub-Saharan African students, especially those from French-speaking countries, prefer Morocco due to the lack of a language barrier. While France remains the top destination for these students, the competition for scholarships is intense. Consequently, Morocco emerges as a viable alternative, ranking seventh in hosting Sub-Saharan students in the world in 2020. Lastly, the opportunity to study for free through scholarships is particularly valuable for students from politically and economically unstable countries.

These factors demonstrate the effectiveness of Morocco's higher education internationalization strategy in attracting and retaining international students, particularly from Africa. The sustained increase in enrollment figures indicates not only successful policy implementation but also a growing recognition of the quality and accessibility of Moroccan education among international students.

Furthermore, Morocco's emphasis on cultural diplomacy through education fosters long-term diplomatic and economic ties. By educating future leaders and professionals from various countries, Morocco ensures a network of influential alumni who have positive associations with the country. These graduates often occupy or have occupied key positions in their home countries, thereby enhancing bilateral relations and facilitating collaboration in multiple sectors. This is evident in the African students who studied in Morocco and went on to hold high positions and ministerial roles in various sectors in countries such as Guinea, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Guinea Conakry, and Tunisia.

However, despite the primary focus of this educational cultural diplomacy tool on Africa, there has been an expansion to include other regions. Notably, Asian countries and an emergence in the Caribbean region. This openness further extends Morocco's soft power beyond the African continent, attracting students from diverse regions. These students, upon returning home, become ambassadors of Moroccan culture.

A notable example of the effectiveness of these scholarships outside Africa is related to the OECS delegation to Morocco, which includes six countries in the Caribbean region. After granting 20 scholarships annually for nearly six years to the OECS students, the delegation decided to open a consulate in the city of Dakhla in 2022, located in the Western Sahara, which is part of the disputed territories with the SADR. This move aligns with other countries that have also opened consulates in Dakhla or Laâyoune, reaffirming the Moroccan identity of its Sahara and territory.

Nevertheless, despite the growing number of international students in Moroccan higher education institutions – both public and private – there remains significant room

for improvement in the internationalization of the country's higher education system. A crucial recommendation is the establishment of a dedicated 'f Morocco' platform specifically designed for international students, akin to those found in countries leading in hosting international students. This platform would serve as a comprehensive and user-friendly portal, allowing applicants to explore potential universities or institutions and access essential information. By streamlining the application process, providing detailed descriptions of academic programs, campus facilities, admission requirements, visa procedures, and practical living information, such a platform would enhance the overall experience for prospective students.

The need for this platform was highlighted in the 'Summary of Achievements for the Year 2022-2023 and Prospects for the Year 2023-2024' report by the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation in October 2023, under the section titled 'Establishing the Foundations of Digital Transformation.' However, the report did not provide further details on its implementation. Establishing such a platform involves several considerations.

Firstly, it must be supported by the development and digitization of Moroccan university portals, particularly those in the public sector. Currently, many university websites – especially faculty-specific sites – are poorly organized and lack essential information. Improving their design, functionality, and content is essential. Clear categorization and easy accessibility to information, including course offerings, faculty qualifications, research opportunities, accommodation options, and student services, are critical to facilitate effective communication.

Another pressing issue is the predominant use of French on existing university websites. This language barrier poses challenges for international students from non-French-speaking countries who seek information. To address this, multilingual support – especially in English and other widely spoken languages – should be offered on these portals to enhance inclusivity and accessibility.

Secondly, the platform should also incorporate private higher education institutions. While public higher education in Morocco currently receives more students, the growing demand for private education warrants equal attention. By integrating private institutions into the platform, prospective students can choose from a broader range of options, which would also benefit Morocco economically. Since the majority of these private institutions charge tuition fees, their inclusion would not only provide more choices for students but also generate additional revenue for the country's education sector. Furthermore, promoting both public and private institutions equally could lead to improved standards and competitiveness within Moroccan higher education, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of education provided.

Additionally, an online international student guidebook detailing the process of studying in Morocco should be provided in various languages. This guidebook would offer practical guidance and support to prospective students, integrating seamlessly into the 'Study in Morocco' platform. It should include step-by-step instructions for application procedures, tips on accommodation, insights into Moroccan culture and customs, and information on health and safety measures. Furthermore, the guidebook could feature testimonials from current international students, FAQs, and contact details for student support services. By providing comprehensive and accessible information, the guidebook would significantly enhance the ease and appeal of studying in Morocco for international students.

Furthermore, robust marketing efforts are essential to promote Moroccan higher education globally. Participation in international education fairs, partnerships with foreign universities, and targeted online advertising campaigns can raise awareness of Morocco as an attractive study destination. Creating support networks for international students, including orientation programs, mentorship schemes, and cultural exchange activities, will enhance their overall experience and satisfaction (See Figure 15 below).

The Mohamed VI Institute of Training Imams and Preachers. When discussing religious diplomacy, the Mohamed VI Institute is seen as a pivotal tool, along with other

initiatives such as the Mohammed VI Foundation of African Oulema, building mosques in different countries, and distributing copies of the Quran. By leveraging moderate Islam, the Institute spreads universal values of peace, coexistence, and interfaith dialogue while combating extremism. Additionally, it emphasizes the integration of women in the renewal of religious discourse, a practice the Kingdom has been implementing since the rehabilitation of Islam in the country in 2005, particularly with the inclusion of Moroccan women preachers. This renewed approach is disseminated globally through the Mohamed VI Institute.

The consistent use of terms like "Moderate Islam," "Middle Path of Islam," and "Moderation of Islam" by various Moroccan officials and the Institute itself, which are subsequently adopted by media and officials from other countries, confirms that the Kingdom has succeeded in promoting its version of Islam by linking its teachings to moderation. Although there is fundamentally one Islam, Morocco's emphasis on moderation and balanced interpretation is key to combating the challenges posed by the false interpretations of religious texts and by extremist groups who falsely claim Islam as their justification.

The institute has garnered international attention, starting with Mali's government, which prompted the Kingdom to initially build a small center to host Malian imams. This success led to the inauguration of the current new campus of the Mohamed VI Institute after several countries approached Morocco to train their imams and preachers. The increase in international students enrolled since the beginning of its mission in 2015 is a testament to its effectiveness for the Kingdom, which aims to spread its widely accepted version of Islam. This growth in international imam and preacher students aligns with the hosting of international students predominantly from Africa. More than 92 % of the students who studied at the institute from 2015 to 2021 were from Africa, including ten nations, along with students from two European countries and one from Asia. This focus on Africa parallels Morocco's broader strategy of fostering close ties with African nations, which share common religious and cultural values.
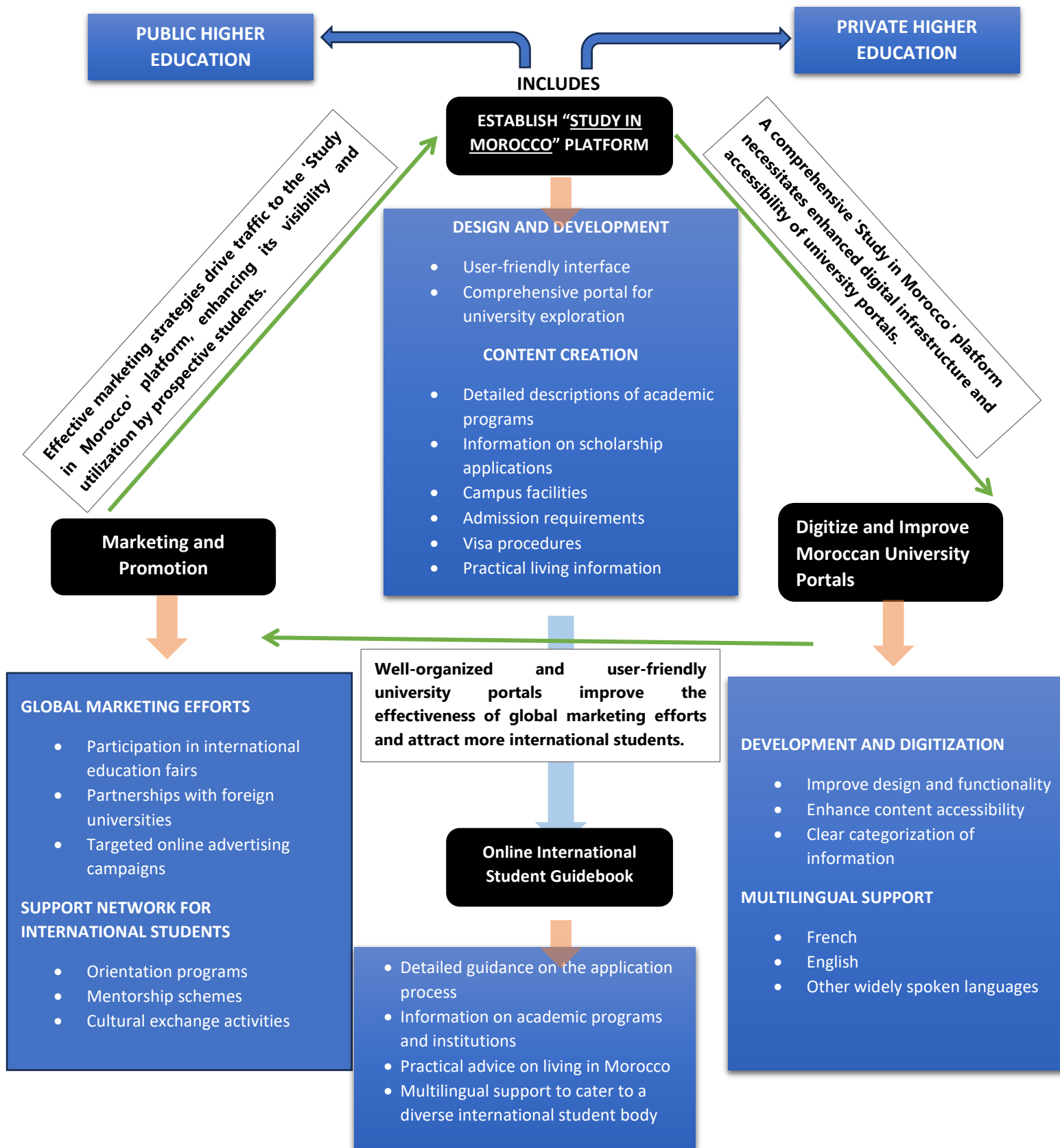
PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION

INCLUDES

ESTABLISH "STUDY IN MOROCCO" PLATFORM

Effective marketing strategies drive traffic to the 'Study in Morocco' platform, enhancing its visibility and utilization by prospective students.

A comprehensive 'Study in Morocco' platform necessitates enhanced digital infrastructure and accessibility of university portals.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

- User-friendly interface
- Comprehensive portal for university exploration

CONTENT CREATION

- Detailed descriptions of academic programs
- Information on scholarship applications
- Campus facilities
- Admission requirements
- Visa procedures
- Practical living information

Marketing and Promotion

Digitize and Improve Moroccan University Portals

Well-organized and user-friendly university portals improve the effectiveness of global marketing efforts and attract more international students.

GLOBAL MARKETING EFFORTS

- Participation in international education fairs
- Partnerships with foreign universities
- Targeted online advertising campaigns

SUPPORT NETWORK FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Orientation programs
- Mentorship schemes
- Cultural exchange activities

Online International Student Guidebook

- Detailed guidance on the application process
- Information on academic programs and institutions
- Practical advice on living in Morocco
- Multilingual support to cater to a diverse international student body

DEVELOPMENT AND DIGITIZATION

- Improve design and functionality
- Enhance content accessibility
- Clear categorization of information

MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT

- French
- English
- Other widely spoken languages

Figure 15 - Establishing "Study In Morocco" Platform for Enhancing Higher Education in Morocco[20]

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[20] Created by the author

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The curriculum at the Institute is of paramount importance due to its mixed courses. The inclusion of teachings on other religions, notably Judaism and Christianity, aims to foster a comprehensive understanding among imams and preachers. Additionally, teaching the political systems of each student's respective country, and how Islamic knowledge can be applied within these systems, is crucial. This prepares imams to be both religious and civic leaders. The incorporation of IT training ensures that future imams and preachers can engage with modern technology, enabling them to reach wider audiences and counter extremist ideologies online. Moreover, vocational training provided to African students equips them with practical skills, ensuring that they have viable economic opportunities upon returning home. This initiative helps to prevent the recruitment of vulnerable individuals by extremist groups, who often exploit financial hardships.

All these factors together demonstrate the Institute's comprehensive approach to religious education. By promoting moderate Islam, integrating women into religious leadership, fostering interfaith dialogue, providing practical skills, and embracing modern technology, the Mohamed VI Institute positions itself as a model for other countries aiming to combat extremism and promote a balanced, inclusive interpretation of Islam. The success of this model is reflected in the increasing number of international students and the widespread acceptance of Morocco's moderate Islamic teachings, along with the appreciation Morocco has received from the heads of state and officials of beneficiary countries. This approach not only enhances Morocco's religious diplomacy but also contributes to global efforts in promoting peace and stability.

Although the Institute has seen significant growth and received positive feedback since its inauguration, its long-term effectiveness remains a question. One concern is whether the Institute continues to guide its alumni imams and preachers after graduation. While the short-term impact appears positive across various dimensions, for long-term success, these imams should serve as informal ambassadors of Moroccan Islam in their respective countries. Therefore, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and the Institute should

maintain a supportive relationship with graduates, akin to nurturing seeds that require continuous care.

To address this, an alumni association is recommended for effective communication with former students, similar to the Morocco Alumni network for those who studied in higher education institutions in Morocco. This association could gather alumni in an online community, providing ongoing support and courses as needed, and organizing forums and seminars. Such initiatives would reinforce the Institute's role and enhance its reputation, directly benefiting Morocco's nation brand.

Furthermore, the institute's efforts to integrate women into their strategy should be enhanced. While Morocco has made strides in integrating women into the new religious discourse by enrolling 100 female preachers each year at the institute, this figure pales in comparison to the number of female international students. Between 2015 and 2021, only 226 female preachers were enrolled at the institute, most of whom hailed from African countries.

Participating in Sport Mega Events: The FIFA World Cup Example. The analysis of the Moroccan National Team's journey in the 2022 FIFA World Cup offers a compelling case study for the effectiveness of sport mega-events as a tool for cultural diplomacy. The team's unexpected success transcended the realm of athletics, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Moroccan culture on a global scale. This aligns with Rees' (2011) four primary dimensions of using sports as a tool of cultural diplomacy, highlighting the multifaceted impact of sports beyond mere competition.

One key aspect of this success lies in the projection of Moroccan values. The players' interactions with their mothers and public displays of religious devotion resonated with audiences worldwide. Media coverage amplified these acts, highlighting the importance of family and faith in Moroccan society. This portrayal went beyond mere spectacle; it fostered a sense of connection and respect for a culture often unseen or misunderstood. By leveraging sport as a means for development, these cultural displays

can play a vital role in achieving broader social goals, such as fostering mutual understanding and respect among diverse cultural groups.

Furthermore, the team's performance served as a rallying point for continental pride and unity. Their success resonated with Pan-African, Pan-Arab, and Pan-Islamic communities, fostering a sense of shared identity and achievement. This transcended political tensions, as seen in the support from Algerian supporters despite the Western Sahara dispute. This case demonstrates the potential of sporting events to bridge divides and promote a sense of solidarity across cultural and geographic boundaries, thereby advancing peaceful international relations. Sporting events, as Rees suggests, can facilitate peaceful dialogues and reconciliation between conflicting or divided nations.

The most quantifiable impact lies in the surge of global attention Morocco received. Search engine queries and traditional media coverage skyrocketed, demonstrating a newfound interest in the nation. Social media engagement mirrored this trend, with fans and celebrities alike celebrating Morocco's achievements. This newfound visibility translated into a significant increase in interest in visiting Morocco, with tourism websites experiencing a dramatic rise in traffic. The World Cup served as a powerful marketing tool, showcasing Morocco's culture and beauty to a global audience, with the potential to translate into long-term economic benefits. This highlights Rees' point on leveraging sport as a tool for soft power, enhancing Morocco's image and improving its international relations.

This elevated international profile was instrumental in bolstering Morocco's successful bid to co-host the 2030 FIFA World Cup alongside Spain and Portugal, against other bids, with the Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile as the competitive one. The support garnered from the majority of African countries and various other nations underscores the recognition of Morocco's potential as a capable host for such a prestigious event. Hosting the World Cup on Moroccan soil presents a unique opportunity to further showcase the nation's sporting excellence and rich cultural heritage. The benefits observed from the 2022 edition are expected to be magnified, as the event will draw vast numbers of fans,

both attending in person and watching on television. Additionally, this will mark a significant milestone as it will be the first World Cup to be hosted across two different continents, Africa and Europe.

To maximize the benefits of hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup, Morocco should adopt a coherent, inclusive, and adaptive approach to its cultural diplomacy efforts. This strategy should align with the three components of competitive identity: strategy, substance, and symbolic actions illustrated in Figure 16 below.

A well-defined strategy is essential for leveraging the World Cup to promote Morocco's competitive identity. The first step is to assess Morocco's current international perception and cultural identity, both internally and externally. Setting clear goals is crucial; these should include enhancing national pride, improving international relations, and boosting tourism, investment, and educational appeal, among others. Specific objectives can be categorized into:

− Economic Goals: Boosting tourism, attracting foreign investments, and enhancing infrastructure.

− Cultural Goals: Promoting Moroccan culture and values, fostering mutual understanding, and countering stereotypes.

− Social Goals: Building national pride, fostering unity, and promoting social cohesion.

− Educational Goals: Positioning Morocco as a promising destination for higher education.

− Promoting Tolerance and Coexistence: Leveraging institutions like the Mohamed VI Institute to highlight the country's commitment to tolerance, coexistence, and moderate Islam.

To ensure the strategy's success, it must integrate various sectors and bodies such as economic, tourism, education, cultural and other sectors. This requires creating a long-

term plan that aligns all relevant stakeholders towards the common goal of leveraging the World Cup for cultural diplomacy and nation brand promotion.

Substance involves the tangible implementation of the strategy through effective execution and real initiatives. Key areas to focus on include:

–   Infrastructure Development: Investing in building and upgrading stadiums, transportation networks, and other facilities. This effort is already noticeable as Morocco has started these projects after winning the bid. These improvements are essential for hosting the World Cup and will leave a lasting legacy.

–   Cultural Showcases: Developing programs that highlight Moroccan culture, such as art exhibitions, music festivals, and culinary events during the World Cup. These should be integrated into the tournament's activities to ensure global audiences experience Moroccan heritage.

–   Educational Initiatives: Implementing educational campaigns about Morocco's history, traditions, and contemporary society. Partnering with international educational institutions to promote cultural exchange programs. Promoting Morocco as a study destination by highlighting its universities and the Mohamed VI Institute, emphasizing Morocco's commitment to moderate Islam, tolerance, and coexistence.

–   Community Engagement: Engaging local communities in the preparations and events of the World Cup, ensuring that the benefits are felt at the grassroots level. This includes job creation, skills development, and community-driven projects.

Symbolic actions are crucial in communicating Morocco's identity and values to the world. Hosting the World Cup itself is a significant symbolic action that positions Morocco as a capable and hospitable nation on the global stage. Additional efforts include:

–   Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives: Implementing symbolic acts that resonate with global audiences. Examples include organizing grand opening and closing ceremonies that tell the story of Morocco's rich cultural heritage and contemporary dynamism.

–   Iconic Projects: Launching projects with high symbolic value, such as creating a "Cultural Village" that represents the diverse regions of Morocco during the World Cup.

–   Leveraging Media: Using media strategically to amplify symbolic actions. Highlighting stories of Morocco's cultural richness and the positive impact of the World Cup on local communities through documentaries, social media campaigns, and international press coverage.

–   Promoting Tolerance and Coexistence: Highlighting Morocco as a land of tolerance and coexistence, aligning with the goals and objectives of the Mohamed VI Institute. This institution symbolizes Morocco's commitment to moderate Islam and can be a focal point in demonstrating the country's values during the World Cup.

By strategically combining these components--strategy, substance, and symbolic actions--Morocco can effectively use the 2030 FIFA World Cup as a platform for cultural diplomacy. This approach will not only enhance Morocco's international reputation but also foster long-term benefits for its economy, society, and cultural heritage. The World Cup provides a unique opportunity to showcase Morocco's rich cultural tapestry, promote its values, and build stronger international relations through the universal language of sport. Additionally, promoting Morocco as a destination for education and a model of tolerance will further solidify its competitive identity on the global stage.
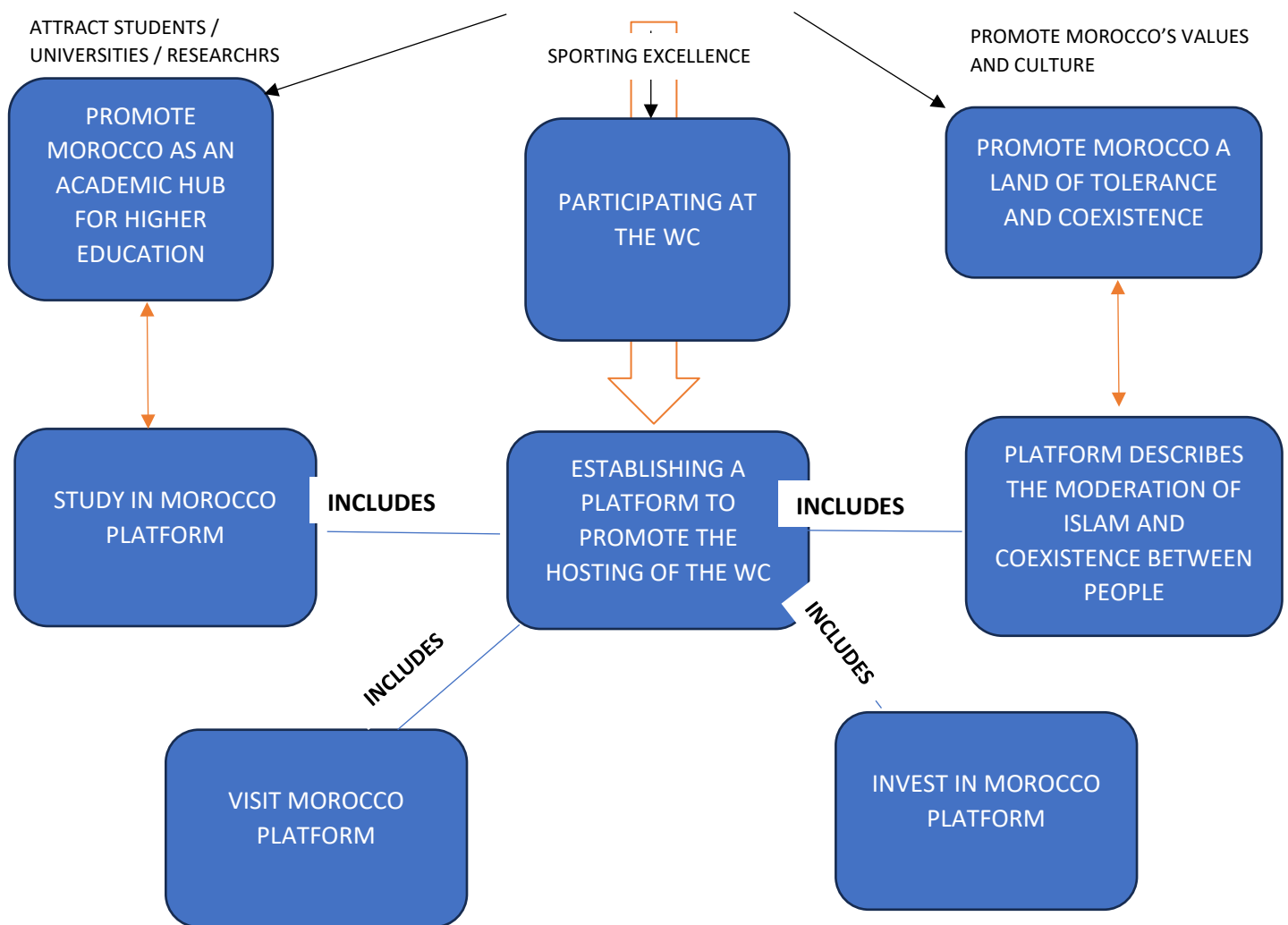
Figure 16 - Establishing A Moroccan Competitive Identity Aligning with the Host of 2030 FIFA World Cup[21]

In general, the use of cultural diplomacy tools has significantly enhanced Morocco's nation brand by improving its image, reputation, and influence abroad, aligning with our first hypothesis. Each type of cultural diplomacy tool impacts the nation brand based on its context (see Figure 17 below). This impact is demonstrated through three key strategies: hosting international students, establishing the Mohamed VI Institute, and participating in mega sports events.

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[21] Created by the author

By welcoming international students, Morocco has established itself as a regional academic hub, particularly within the African continent, while also expanding its reach globally. This initiative promotes educational excellence by offering prospective students high-quality academic opportunities and positioning Morocco as a center of cultural exchange that facilitates interactions among diverse nationalities.

The Mohamed VI Institute plays a pivotal role in branding Morocco as a center of tolerance and moderate Islam. It promotes the Moroccan version of Islam, which emphasizes moderation and openness, to the world. The institute reinforces Morocco's leadership in religious education by training imams and preachers who contribute to the global dissemination of Morocco's values and religious teachings.

Additionally, Morocco's active participation in major sporting events has bolstered its international recognition and showcased its sporting excellence. Players and staff serve as cultural ambassadors, projecting Moroccan values through these tournaments.

It is noteworthy that the contribution of each of these tools to Morocco's nation brand varies according to the type, target, and context of each tool, aligning with our second hypothesis. Furthermore, the emphasis on Africa in Morocco's cultural diplomacy is evident in the growth of African students in various educational systems and the dominant recipients of the AMCI scholarship. Similarly, African imams and preachers constitute the majority of those studying at the Mohamed VI Institute. This further aligns with our third hypothesis, which posits that cultural diplomacy tools are more effective in building and promoting Morocco's nation brand in Africa than in other regions, owing to its historical, cultural, and political ties with the continent.
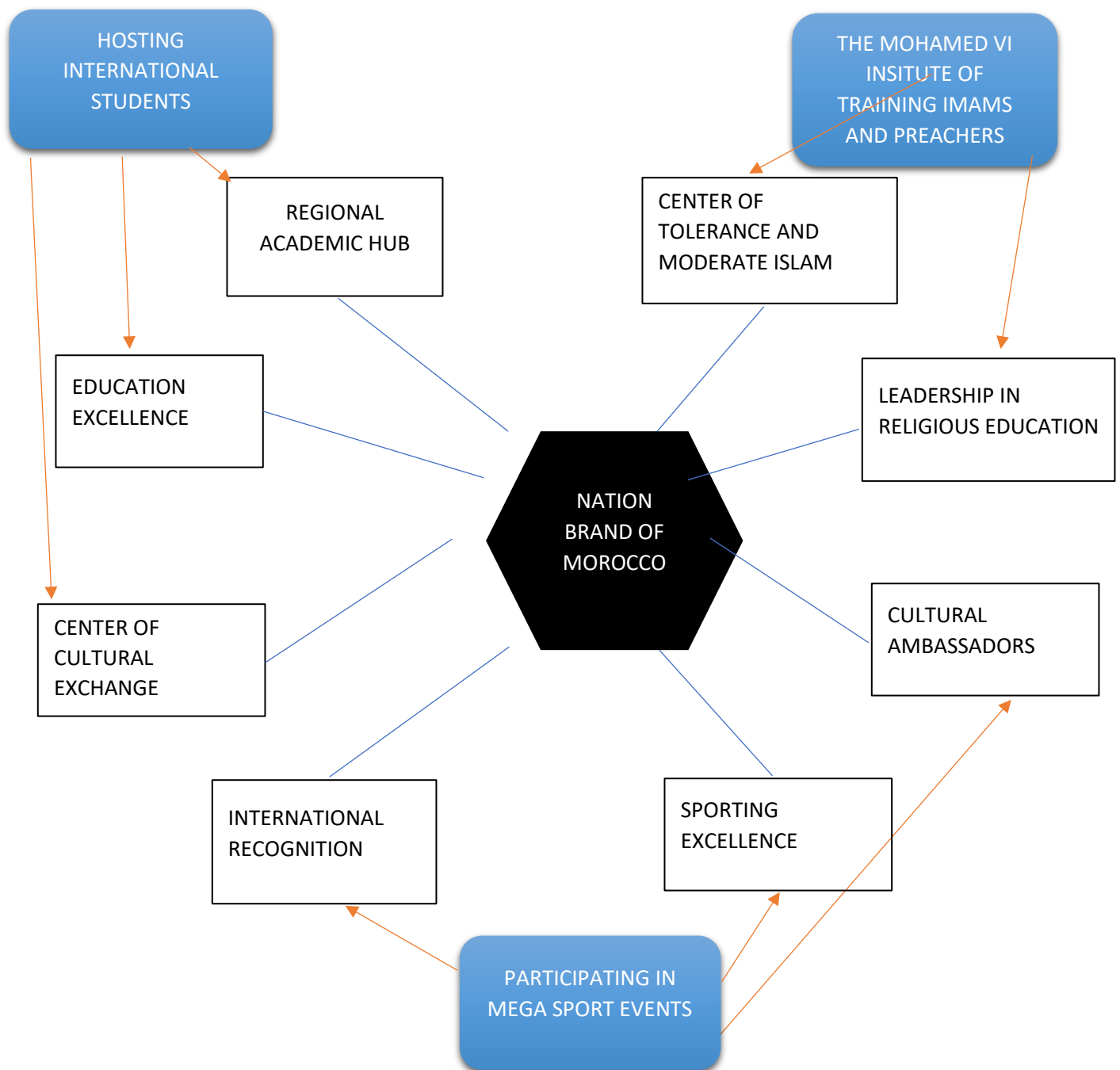
Figure 17 - Cultural Diplomacy Tools Enhancing The Moroccan Nation Brand[22]

CONCLUSION

The Moroccan cultural diplomacy journey has proven to be an effective tool in leveraging the nation's brand alongside other strategic factors. Various initiatives aimed at building trust and mutual benefits have been implemented, showcasing Morocco's dedication to enhancing its international image. This paper has assessed the contribution of three cultural diplomacy tools to Morocco's broader nation brand: hosting international students, the Mohamed VI Institute, and participation in mega sports events. Their effectiveness has been evident through the findings discussed.

Morocco's diplomatic focus on Africa can be understood through the historical, cultural, political connections between the Kingdom and the African continent. Additionally, Morocco's commitment to definitively resolving the Western Sahara dispute by closing the door on the SADR front has been a significant aspect of its foreign policy for nearly 40 years. Morocco's decision to quit the African Union after the SADR was proclaimed a sovereign state was a misstep, as it allowed the SADR to gain more diplomatic support. However, in 2017, Morocco rejoined the African Union after extensive diplomatic efforts by the King, who visited several African countries to garner support.

This return to the African Union proved fruitful, as Moroccan diplomacy succeeded in attracting votes from African nations that previously recognized the SADR. Cultural diplomacy played a crucial role in this achievement. The total number of consulates opened in the southern provinces has reached 27: 15 in Dakhla and 12 in Laayoune, with the majority of them from Africa. The Western Sahara dispute remains a "weak point" for Morocco, as major countries often use it as leverage in diplomatic negotiations. However, recently, Morocco has strengthened its diplomatic efforts to resolve this issue definitively, with culture being at the forefront.

The increase in international students in higher education and at the Mohamed VI Institute in recent years, along with positive feedback from students and officials from beneficiary countries, and the outstanding performance at the 2022 FIFA World Cup, which also promoted Moroccan values globally, collectively indicate a positive impact on the nation's brand, likely enhancing its brand equity.

Nevertheless, quantifying the impact of these initiatives on Morocco's nation brand remains complex due to the absence of concrete metrics. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responsible for the Kingdom's diplomatic relations, conducts assessments based on reports from diplomatic posts following significant events. These reports detail the objectives, resources utilized, activities undertaken, and audience responses, with media coverage also deemed a crucial indicator of success. (Boutabssil, 2021)

The implications of the findings in this paper are profound, underscoring the significance of cultural diplomacy in modern international relations. Morocco's approach offers a potential model for other nations aiming to bolster their global standing through cultural diplomacy. Furthermore, the practical recommendations outlined herein, such as the establishment of a streamlined "Study In Morocco" platform and the advancement of digitalization in higher education institutions alongside global marketing endeavors, stand to enhance the efficacy of such initiatives.

Furthermore, establishing an alumni association for imams and preachers from the Mohamed VI institute would bolster the soft power of this tool. These informal ambassadors of Moroccan Islam would serve as conduits for spreading the country's cultural and religious values globally, contributing to its broader diplomatic objectives and enhancing its nation brand.

Hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup presents a prime opportunity for Morocco to leverage its cultural diplomacy efforts, with much of the groundwork already in place. Through a strategic integration of key components—strategy, substance, and symbolic actions—Morocco can effectively utilize the event as a platform for cultural diplomacy. Establishing a comprehensive promotional platform for the tournament, including

initiatives such as the "Study in Morocco," "Visit Morocco," and "Invest in Morocco" platforms, will contribute to showcasing the vibrant nation brand of the country. This multifaceted approach will not only enhance Morocco's cultural image but also bolster each sector individually, amplifying their respective strengths.

Future research directions present exciting opportunities to deepen our understanding of Morocco's cultural diplomacy efforts. Firstly, a dedicated study could delve into a specific tool, such as the Mohamed VI Institute, analyzing its long-term impact on targeted sectors like education and religious leadership. This would provide valuable insights into the program's effectiveness in fostering positive perceptions and potentially attracting foreign investment or academic partnerships. Secondly, comparative studies examining similar strategies in different cultural and geopolitical contexts could be highly beneficial. By identifying best practices and areas for improvement across diverse settings, we can contribute to the development of a more nuanced and adaptable framework for cultural diplomacy initiatives.

In summary, the strategic deployment of cultural diplomacy by Morocco serves as a robust model demonstrating the efficacy of such measures in cultivating a nation's international persona. The harmonious fusion of educational outreach, religious engagement, and visibility in prominent sporting events has significantly elevated Morocco's global profile. Amidst the intricate dance of global diplomacy, Morocco's dedication to cultural initiatives is poised to continue as a key element in its quest to forge a unified and positive national identity. This study not only enriches the discourse on cultural diplomacy and nation branding but also provides a versatile blueprint for other nations aspiring to enhance their international presence.

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