

UNIVERSIDAD DEL ROSARIO



**OPPORTUNITIES OF CHANGING THE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE OF COLOMBIA
THROUGH TOURISM TAKING AS BASIS SPORT EVENTS**

GRADUATION PROJECT

Santiago Andrés López Castaño

BOGOTÁ D. C, COLOMBIA

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- Administración de Negocios Internacionales

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2025

Dedicatoria

A mis padres por su apoyo para ser profesionales.

A los compañeros de estudio, compartimos grandes espacios académicos y personales.

Esperamos en un futuro próximo coadyuvar y servir en calidad de profesionales.

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Glossary

Barrismo: The term is used to designate those groups organized within the supporters of a particular club or national team, usually associated with football. It originates from the British word hooligan.

Resumen

Este trabajo busca evaluar cómo el turismo a través de eventos deportivos puede influir en la imagen/perspectiva/reputación de un país, así como si estas dos variables son suficientes para considerar cambiar la percepción que la gente tiene de un país. En el centro de la investigación se encuentra Colombia, un país que se ha visto afectado por una época de narcotráfico y violencia, donde la imagen del narcotráfico y de Pablo Escobar ha dado lugar a una mala reputación, incluso 30 años después de los hechos. Sin embargo, como contraparte, son evidentes los esfuerzos del país a nivel cultural, deportivo y turístico, por resaltar la imagen contemporánea del país, así como su riqueza y su propuesta al mundo.

Mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas, se evaluaron los criterios y la opinión de los participantes sobre las oportunidades que tiene Colombia para cambiar su imagen a través del turismo de eventos deportivos, donde se encontró cuál es la imagen de Colombia hoy en día para el común de la gente, así como la forma en que el país puede aprovechar el turismo y los eventos deportivos para resaltar su riqueza. En conclusión, el país tiene una larga lista de razones por las cuales puede ser reconocido a nivel mundial, las cuales a través de un buen trabajo y proyecto en colaboración de los diferentes actores involucrados pueden convertirse en una realidad a largo plazo.

Palabras Clave: turismo, deportes, grandes eventos deportivos, colombia, percepción, eventos, reputación, cultura, actividad económica, fútbol, transporte, infraestructura.

Abstract

This paper seeks to evaluate how tourism through sporting events can influence the image/perspective/reputation of a country, as well as whether these two variables are sufficient to consider changing people's perception of a country. At the center of the research is Colombia, a country that has been affected by an era of drug trafficking and violence, where the image of drug trafficking and Pablo Escobar has resulted in a bad reputation, even 30 years after the events. However, as a counterpart, the country's efforts at the cultural and sporting level as well as tourism, to highlight the contemporary image of the country, as well as its richness and its proposal to the world, are evident.

By means of semi-structured interviews, the criteria and opinion of the participants were evaluated regarding the opportunities Colombia has to change its image through tourism of sporting events, where it was found which is the image of Colombia today for the common people, as well as how the country can take advantage of tourism and sporting events to highlight its wealth. In conclusion, the country has a long list of reasons why it can be recognized worldwide, which through a good work and project in collaboration of the different actors involved can become a reality in the long-term.

Keywords: tourism, sports, major sport events, colombia, perception, events, reputation, culture, economic activity, football, transportation, infrastructure.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

The purpose of this research work is to investigate the possibility of exploiting tourism through sporting events in order to change people's awareness of a specific thought such as the historical image of Colombia over the years.

The reputation or image of Colombia is well known internationally due to different events and/or facts that took place during the dark period of drug trafficking, which covers the period between 1978-1997 approximately, and which has transcended until today, almost 30 years later.

Starting from the exportation of marijuana, cocaine and other psychoactive and illegal substances (for trade and consumption depending on the country), this 'Colombian product' was gaining more and more strength and recognition at a global level, which led to the creation of groups called drug trafficking cartels, with a great power of money, influence and weapons. At the same time, the different illegal groups began to grow and have more presence, resulting in different acts such as: The taking of the Palace of Justice in 1985, assassination of ministers, presidential candidates, senators, high and low military and police ranks, terrorist attacks in the big cities (car bombs among others), the growing war between cartels, as well as the most shameful fact --- from the point of view of this research work --- the resignation on October 25,

1982 to the organization of the 1986 World Cup by Belisario Betancur president of the country at that time, This was due to the tense public order situation and the inability of the state to manage an event of such magnitude, leaving Colombia as the only country to renounce the organization of the greatest world football event in the history of the World Cup.

These facts mentioned above have left as a result that the history and image of the country have been stained - unfortunately - to this day, however, for several years, the state and the passing governments have made an economic, social and political effort to change this perspective that was left in the inhabitants of the world, being so that in recent years Colombia has generated a tourism apart from drug trafficking, which has driven the country towards another route, which has become one of the most important economic engines of the country and its inhabitants.

On the other hand, it is necessary to give a definition of tourism, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as the set of activities of people who travel and stay for leisure, business or other purposes for a period not exceeding one year, this definition has been adopted for statistical purposes, hence, among others, the time limit of up to one year.

This economic activity has been present for many years in our society due to its advantages for both the host country and its visitors, among these advantages we can find income generation, employment growth, preservation of traditions and cultural heritage, development of local infrastructures, cultural exchange between countries, improvement of the local economy, eradication of stereotypes, etc. These different benefits contribute to the growth of countries and their societies on the way to the formation of a prosperous and stable nation.

Thus, tourism can become - for developing countries - a sustainable and enriching way to host political, economic, sporting, entertainment, cultural and social events, and to have the eyes of the world on the country in its organization and execution.

Having set the context, we can now focus on why tourism has a relationship with the hosting of major international sporting events, this kind of events have been recognized as a significant opportunity for countries to enhance their tourism industry and promote economic development. Like China, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Japan, United States, Brazil among other have put some pressure to host some important events, Formula 1 GP, Winter & Summer Olympic Games, Football World Cups etc.

A great example that supports this fact is the pressure (bribery and purchase as it was found) by Qatar to host the 2022 World Cup, where this country wanted to open its culture and doors to the world to be known, even beyond being an oil power, the top leaders wanted people to put their eyes on the country to make it a tourist destination, however the monumental economic investment made by the country may not be reflected in the short term to its aspiration to be among the minds of consumers.

The national sport enjoys both domestic and international prestige, as well as natural and gastronomic tourist beauty. In this regard, it is worth noting that the senior national football team is in open competition for the Federation International of Football Association (FIFA) sporting events to be held in 2025 in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

It is hoped to achieve a place representing the country and, of course, South America. It is perhaps one of the most important sporting events at orbital level for all the existing fans, the wealth and the conformation of great teams and players. The country is looking forward to this

regional qualifier and is very happy because it is in second place in the standings. In other words, the Colombian national team is on the verge of qualifying for the 2026 World Cup.

In this sense, it is imperative the commitment of the Colombian Football Federation (FCF), not only with the fans, but also with the objective of achieving a place at the highest world sporting event, given that it did not manage to participate in the previous tournament in 2022.

Now, in review of other international football competitions, the participation of the Women's National Team in the Olympic Games in Paris 2024, they reached the Quarter-Finals where they faced the current Senior World Cup Champions: Spain and lost from the penalty spot (Colombian Football Federation, 2024). According to the new ranking published last August 16 by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) Colombia rose to 21st place with 1779.42 points, being the best position in history (Colombian Football Federation, 2024).

On the other hand, the participation in the 2024 Olympic Games was just outstanding, which suggests an important coordination between the State entities committed to national sport. In other words, to maximize financial resources at the highest level in order to have access to brilliant professionals in sports medicine, psychology, excellent coaches and also to preserve in very good condition the sports venues for all sports and all sportsmen and women.

Likewise, it is also suggested that they have and contemplate a better level of international high-level competition, this in order to arrive very well prepared to all the sporting events in which they manage to participate.

Such articulation must be done with state entities and which are framed with the guidelines of the government plan, i.e.;

i) Democratizing access to this fundamental right and also the construction of a national map that allows for the identification of the conditions and strengths of each region.

ii) Consolidate Sports Training Schools as centers for the development of thought, expression and movement, with a pedagogical model in accordance with the particularities of the territories, prioritizing PDET municipalities with the inclusion of a differential approach.

iii) Support for women has a special chapter, a strategy that will increase participation in sport, recreation and physical activity programs, as well as the promotion of the development of professional and high-performance sport, in addition to the implementation of a tool for prevention and guidance in the face of gender violence in the sector.

iv) Inter-institutional work will be vital for the promotion of barrismo as a culture of life. In conjunction with the Ministries of the Interior, Education, Culture and Sport, a public policy will be defined in order to recognize this practice as a strategy to improve citizen coexistence. It will also strengthen the processes that promote the construction of networks and community organization.

v) To position the country as a continental sports power, the sports reserve program will be strengthened, in addition to expanding support for the preparation and participation of athletes and para-athletes in international events, in coordination with the actors associated with the National Sports System (SND),

vi) Convert events, tourism and enterprises related to sport, recreation and physical activity into economic dynamisers in the national territory (MinDeportes, 2024).

With the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup scheduled to be held in Colombia in 2024--- between August and September 2024----there is a unique opportunity to explore the potential

impact of this event on tourism improvement in the country. Colombia has previously hosted two FIFA tournaments: the FIFA U-20 World Cup 2011, the men's equivalent of the women's competition, and the FIFA Futsal World Cup 2016. The South-American country will become only the second CONMEBOL host nation of the women's U-20 global competition after Chile in 2008. (FIFA, 2024)

Women's football has gained more recognition in recent years, achieving more private and public capital investment around the world as well as supporters, fans and viewers therefore is a great opportunity for different countries and regions to bet on this sport in a long-term perspective.

Is mandatory to mention how important it is for Colombia to have the privilege of holding the U20 Women's World Cup in the country, because the eyes of the world will once again be on the nation, but this time from a different perspective. This event can mark a before and after for the country, because if it is carried out in an efficient way it can change the international reputation of Colombia, as well as be taken into account for events of greater magnitude in the future creating a recognition among sport events.

It is very important to understand that events of this magnitude will attract not only the delegations of the countries and families of the players, but also hundreds of tourists that will attend mainly for the sport event, therefore the nation has to be prepared to welcome and host them among their territory; Colombia has to take advantage of it because chances of this magnitude are not present twice in a short term.

1.2 Business Problem

Over the years Colombia has been recognized for an image tainted by violence and drug trafficking, being highly identified by the figures of Pablo Escobar, the Medellin Cartel and the Cali Cartel, these triggers have created a bubble of ideology about the country that is reflected in comments, thoughts and behavior towards the country and its people around the world. It is almost certain that if you ask several people about the first thing that comes to their minds about the country, a thought related to drug trafficking or violence will come to mind.

However, for several years now, thanks to famous figures, icons and celebrities, the country's recognition has been changing little by little, positioning the nation for different reasons, such as sport, entertainment and education. In the same way, a great economic effort has been made to create a country brand that through marketing 'sells' the other face of Colombia, which stands out for its biodiversity, natural wealth and culture, exposing tourism as a strong alternative to change the perception of the country.

Therefore, this work focuses on how through tourism a country has the ability to change the perception and international awareness, as well as through sporting events, such as the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup Colombia 2024 and whether it is a possibility for a country like Colombia in the medium term to be recognized by an image of a country that has a strong brand.

In order to explore whether it is possible that the tourism and sports industry in the country can become, over the years, an economic alternative that represents a strong activity for

Colombia and to be able to conclude whether there can be a relevance to the world of business that is reflected by public, private and foreign investment in the country in the coming years.

1.3 Research Question

The central question of the study, which was created according to the context of the business problem, is:

What are the opportunities to change the international image of Colombia through sport event tourism?

1.4 Objectives

The principal objective of this paper is able to identify the areas for opportunities to change the international reputation of Colombia through tourism of sport events and generate recommendations based on the background that will be found through the literature review as well as the data recollected through the methodology.

The secondary objectives are to identify or conclude if the tourism may influence the international image/reputation of a country and if this can change through this phenomenon.

Also, to find tools and insights with which to demonstrate how Colombia can begin to be recognized for its tourism through events, as well as its capacity to carry out sporting events of medium and large magnitude.

These objectives seek to provide a guide for the methodology in search of an answer to the research question.

The following are the general and specific objectives:

1.4.1 General Objective

Identify opportunities to change Colombia's international image through sporting events tourism

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

Elaborate an approximation of Colombia's international image through the analysis of collected data.

Determine opportunities for changing Colombia's international image through tourism of sporting events.

Describe what are the opportunities for change in the international image of Colombia through the tourism of sporting events

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to analyze current research and literature in order to develop a theoretical framework that can be compared with the data obtained through the methodology described in this paper. The analysis will primarily focus on the connection between the hosting of major sporting events and tourism development, with particular attention to successful examples that could serve as a reference for their application in Colombia.

The literature review is divided into several key sections: first, Colombia's international image is analyzed. Next, a study of the country's current sports background is conducted, followed by an exploration of tourism development and the impact that major sporting events have on this sector. Finally, the challenges and opportunities facing sport event tourism are examined, providing a comprehensive view of how these factors interrelate. The literature review is divided by:

1. Colombia's International Image
2. Overview of Colombian Sports Today
3. Tourism Development
4. Major Sporting Events on Tourism Development

2.2 Colombia's International Image

2.2.1 Drug trafficking influence

Colombia during the 1980s and 1990s. The Medellín and Cali cartels, together with the figure of Pablo Escobar and the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers, disrupted the stability of the Colombian state and had an impact on political decisions and were responsible for the violence perpetrated at the national level.

2.2.1.1 The Medellín Cartel & the figure of Pablo Escobar

Pablo Escobar, leader of the Medellín Cartel, stood out as one of the most important personalities in drug trafficking during the 1980s. Thanks to cocaine trafficking, Escobar not only became one of the wealthiest men in the world, but also used his enormous power to impact Colombian politics. His influence was such that in 1982 he was elected as an alternate in the Colombian House of Representatives (Policia Nacional, 2019).

The National Police (2019) indicates that “Escobar financed political campaigns and bribed key officials in an attempt to prevent the passage of extradition laws.” His persistence in resisting extradition to the United States motivated him to start a violent war against the Colombian government, marked by terrorist attacks and homicides that are still remembered today not only by Colombians but also internationally.

There were several attempts to destabilize the government which targeted important figures and resulted in the death of civilians, politicians, journalists, judges, prosecutors, policeman, etc. These attempts included: (1) the bombing of Avianca flight 203 in 1989, with the objective of murdering Cesar Gaviria – then presidential candidate -, causing the death of 107 individuals, (2) the car bomb explosion in front of the now defunct DAS with the objective of killing its director and resulted in 70 deaths and more than 600 people injured (Policía Nacional, 2019) and (3) The assassinations of Rodrigo Lara Bonilla (minister of justice 1984), Guillermo Cano Isaza (director of the newspaper El Espectador 1986) and Luis Carlos Galán (presidential candidate 1989), all after making public statements against Pablo Escobar's influences (Martínez, 2024)

According to the National Police (2019), “Escobar's violence generated an era of terror that affected not only state institutions, but also society as a whole”. Escobar's death in 1993 marked a significant event, however, the effect of his legacy on Colombian politics and drug trafficking persisted long after his death and has been conveyed as part of Colombian culture in television series such as “Narcos” and “Escobar: El patrón del mal”.

2.2.1.2 The Cali Cartel (Rodríguez Orejuela brothers)

While the Medellin Cartel favored violence as an instrument of influence, the Cali Cartel decided to employ a more discreet but equally risky tactic: corruption, a concept that has marked the country's name over the years. Under the leadership of the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers, this criminal group got inside state entities through bribery and the financing of big political campaigns. The most representative example of this impact was the famous “Process 8,000” which found that the Cali Cartel had backed Ernesto Samper's presidential campaign in 1994.

According to Mayor (2010), “this scandal showed the enormous impact of drug trafficking in Colombian politics and the vulnerability of the country's institutions”.

The 8,000 Case became one of the biggest political scandals in Colombian history, provoking numerous investigations and causing Samper's government to enter into a serious crisis of legitimacy. Although Samper denied any knowledge of the illegal funds that entered his campaign, the scandal impacted his administration and increased distrust in the Colombian political system, which was already badly affected. Mayor (2010) states that “this event showed how the cartels had managed to weave a web of corruption that affected the highest spheres of power in Colombia”.

2.2.1.3 “Narco-futbol”

Drug trafficking was a big part of futbol in Colombia during the 1980s and 1990s, when major drug traffickers used their vast wealth to infiltrate the country's most important teams. This connection between organized crime and futbol not only damaged the integrity of the championships, but also left an indelible impact on the history of the sport in Colombia and the region.

One of the best-known cases of the influence of drug trafficking is that of Atletico Nacional and the gigantic capital injected into the team by Pablo Escobar and the Medellin Cartel. In 1989 the team became the first Colombian team to win the Copa Libertadores, however, this victory was tainted by “the testimony of rival players, referees and even drug traffickers...as they relate it to the influence of Pablo Escobar”. Recently, Nicolás Escobar, Pablo Escobar's nephew, denied that his uncle had bought the title but declared “that a basket was placed with a large sum of money, which was shared by the whole team...I believe that it united them” (Casa Editorial El Tiempo, n.d.).

As for Millonarios, which was in a financial crisis, it received financing from Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, one of the leaders of the Medellín Cartel. Gacha, also known as “El Mexicano,” acquired shares in the club and, during his period of influence, the team experienced one of its most prosperous periods, winning local trophies. According to Pino (2012), “Rodríguez Gacha was one of the biggest investors in the club and used Millonarios as a means to launder money from drug trafficking”. However, this sporting achievement was overshadowed by violence and intimidation, particularly towards players, coaches and referees, and Pino also mentions that teams like Millonarios were used for money laundering through false contracts and the registration of money in pesos rather than dollars.

Likewise, America de Cali, under the control of the Rodriguez Orejuela brothers of the Cali Cartel, was another major team used for money laundering using the same techniques that Pino (2012) highlights for Millonarios. In the 1980s, America controlled futbol in Colombia and reached multiple Copa Libertadores finals. However, according to , the club was penalized and remained on the U.S. government's “Clinton List” due to its connections to drug trafficking seriously affecting its international financial operations until 2013 (“America De Cali Salió De La ‘Lista Clinton’; - ESPN, 2015).

On a final note, the cartels not only financed the teams financially but also resorted to violence to ensure the success of their clubs, for example, the murder of referee Alvaro Ortega in 1989 which led to the only instance in which the Colombian Professional Futbol League was suspended. According to Montes (2016) Ortega was “sat down to death by Pablo Escobar” after refereeing the America de Cali and Medellín match, where Escobar's team was defeated after a bicycle kick was disallowed for a dangerous foul. 19 days later, Pablo Escobar's hitmen shot him as he was leaving his hotel, ending his life.

2.2.2 Showcasing Tourism and Biodiversity

Colombia's varied attractions in terms of biodiversity, culture, and gastronomy are helping to cement its standing as a popular travel destination worldwide.

According to Castaño (2024) and the World Travel and Tourism Council, Colombia's tourism industry set records in 2024, forecasting a contribution of US\$19.2 billion to the country's GDP, a 14.5% increase from 2019. As a result of this growth, tourism now accounts for 4.7% of Colombia's GDP, confirming its significance as a key factor in the nation's economic development. Additionally, according to the Economic Impact Research 2024, by the end of the year, “the travel and tourism sector will generate 1.45 million jobs, or 6.2% of all occupations in Colombia” (Castaño, 2024).

The number of foreign visitors increased by 28% in 2023 over the previous year, reaching over six million people—the greatest number in the preceding four years according to the Office of Economic Studies of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (2024). Furthermore, ecotourism-related trips rose 9.6% from the year before, highlighting Colombia's biodiversity's appeal as a travel destination (Redacción BIBO, 2024)

2.2.2.1 Leadership in Sustainable Tourism and Biodiversity

Colombia has been highlighted as one of the global benchmarks in sustainable tourism, due to its emphasis on the preservation of its natural heritage and biodiversity. The country obtained the distinction of Leading Green Destination in South America in the World Travel Awards 2023 and “has positioned itself as a global leader in bird watching, registering 1,558 species during the Global Big Day event, surpassing mega-diverse nations such as Peru, Brazil and Ecuador” (Semana, 2024).

Similarly, Carlos Giraldo, president of the Chamber of Tourism, told *Semana Magazine* (2024) that sustainable tourism has become an important pillar for economic development under the assumption of “producing by conserving and conserving by producing”.

It is worth mentioning here that the COP 16 summit led by the city of Cali and the national government is preparing for the Convention on Biological Diversity, COP 16, which begins on October 21 and will last until November 1 of this year. Its main objectives will be to review how well countries have complied with their biodiversity action plans, to reach agreements to finance these plans and to set in motion a mechanism that allows fair and equitable participation in the use of genetic resources, among others (Biodiversidad un tesoro vivo, BIBO, Bienestar humano & Biodiversidad, *El Espectador*, 2024, vol. 1).

This summit will be another historic moment of enormous international importance, as well as of enormous organizational and logistical challenges for the country given the delegations of countries that will visit the city of Cali and its surroundings with scientific agendas around the objectives of the COP 16, i.e.: How to protect biodiversity? Also, consider scientific tourism as a tool for conversation (How to protect biodiversity? Bienestar humano & Biodiversidad, *El Espectador*, 2024, vol. 6).

2.2.2.2 Cultural Heritage and Artistic Legacy in Colombia

Now, in relation to national and international art personalities, in the city of Bogota D.,C is the Botero Museum (Painter Fernando Botero) with original pieces donated by the same author and, in the city of Medellin, is located in the Museum of Antioquia with some other works of the master; others are exposed outdoors around the former governor's office of the department.

The Gold Museum of the Bank of the Republic, which preserves the art of the pre-Hispanic culture, also stands out. This museum's "mission is to preserve, research, catalog and publicize its archaeological collections of gold and silver work, ceramics, lithic and other materials, as a cultural heritage of current and future generations of Colombians, in order to contribute to strengthening the cultural identity of Colombians through enjoyment, learning and inspiration" (Museo del Oro, 2024).

Likewise, it is necessary to emphasize the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO (2024), which refers to the cultural heritage of the nation and says that "it is not limited to monuments and collections of objects, but also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and transmitted to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices relating to nature and the universe, and knowledge and skills related to traditional craftsmanship".

In this sense, "the importance of intangible cultural heritage lies not in the cultural manifestation itself, but in the body of knowledge and skills that are transmitted from generation to generation. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant to both minority and majority social groups within a State, and is of equal importance to developing and developed countries" (UNESCO, 2024).

This is significant to enhance much of the impact of national tourism that is to be reflected at the international level. Among the cultural and intangible heritage sites are the historic center of Santa Cruz de Mompox in the department of Bolívar, with its colonial architecture; the San Agustín Archaeological Park, located in the department of Huila; it preserves large stone sculptures; and the Serranía de Chiribiquete National Natural Park, located

between the departments of Caquetá and Guaviare in the south of the country; its biodiversity and cave paintings, apparently testimony of ancient cultures, stand out. (Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia, 2024).

2.2.2.3 “Marca País”

“Colombia, the country of beauty”, is the unified message of "Marca País" to promote tourism, investment and exports nationally and internationally. It highlights the country's natural, cultural and historical attractions. In addition to what it means to be home to 10% of the world's biodiversity, more than 1900 species of birds and orchids; and the cultural wealth embodied in musical rhythms and languages.

“For the first time in history, the message of the "Marca Pais" is unified for national and international tourism promotion, as a result of the work of the internal teams of Fontur and ProColombia, achieving greater efficiency in the use of public resources”, highlighted the outgoing Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Germán Umaña Mendoza (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, 2024).

In this sense, the ministerial portfolio for the execution of “Colombia, the country of beauty”, has allocated \$28,000 million that will be executed through Fontur and ProColombia during the next two years. This is extremely important in relation to the objective of promoting national tourism.

These resources include a market study and research, the dissemination strategy, audiovisual production (videos and photos) in non-traditional territories, of which there are no promotional images, such as the territories of Development Programs with a Territorial Approach (PDET). Likewise, national and international launches in the main promotional

markets and in digital channels of national and global reach (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, 2024).

In other words, investment in promotion and the “Marca Pais” has a long-term positive impact on the economy and on Colombia's international projection, and makes it possible to promote the country's comprehensive and sustainable development. It is a strategic decision that seeks to position Colombia as an attractive and competitive destination in the global scenario, which generates economic and social benefits over time (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, 2024).

According to the Superintendence of Industry and Commerce (2024), the dynamics of business competitiveness, countries have found it necessary to position themselves in the global economic arena through the use of their name as a brand, so that their business sectors and their governments can communicate to the world what they have to offer and what makes a difference with other states or nations. The effective communication of this set of determining aspects of economic progress led to the emergence of the figure of “Marca Pais”.

The representation of “Marca Pais” welcomes the Paris Convention (Article 6ter) as Decision 486 of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), is the industrial property regime which prohibits the registration of flags and emblems of States as trademarks, as well as the names and emblems of international intergovernmental organizations whose members include at least one country of the Paris Union, the countries that have registered their Country Brand have used different elements that also identify them as a nation (Superintendence of Industry and Commerce, 2024).

The following symbol shows “Marca Pais”:

Figure 1.

Colombia Country Brand Symbol



Note: Country Brand Symbol. Source Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio de Colombia, 2024.

2.2.2.4 Role of Procolombia

ProColombia is the entity attached to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism that includes among its mission the promotion of tourism through its national and international network, contributing to the sustainable and inclusive development of the country.

(ProColombia, 2024).

With the objective of positioning national tourism, the entity contributes to strengthening Colombia's image at the international level. Since 2021, it has been part of the 75 most innovative organizations in tourism policy of Apolitical, a United Kingdom consulting entity that brings together government officials worldwide and guides them in solving the challenges that arise in the tourism industry (ProColombia, 2024).

ProColombia (2024) states that “investment in promotion and the “Marca Pais” has a long-term positive impact on the economy and on Colombia's international projection, and

allows for the country's comprehensive and sustainable development. It is a strategic decision that seeks to position Colombia as an attractive and competitive destination on the global stage, which generates economic and social benefits over time.”

A review of the institutional website shows that in 2022, ProColombia received the Excellence in Tourism 2021 award for the “Illustrated Manual for Tourist Guides: COcreate, COnect and COnserve”, a tool to publicize Colombia's broad cultural diversity (ProColombia, 2024).

And in 2023, the entity won several awards and recognition, namely: i) silver at Cannes Corporate TV for the tourism documentary series Finding Encanto; ii) gold at Terres Festival; iii) finalist diploma at Silafest, Serbia; iv) recognition for its commitment to sustainability in the meetings industry, awarded by Fiexpo and the Global Destination Sustainability Movement; and, v) leading tourism agency in South America at the World Travel Awards (ProColombia, 2024).

These important awards and recognition received by ProColombia mean that, together with “Marca Pais”, the objectives set in relation to the projection and promotion of tourism both nationally and internationally are being met.

Consequently, ProColombia with the care of its work is fulfilling and contributing significantly to the opportunities of changing the international image of Colombia through tourism. And, it becomes another opportunity and strategic relationship to be combined with sporting events of various disciplines and high-level competitions and hosting of the national and international community.

2.2.3 Challenges and Setbacks in Organizing International Sporting Events

Colombia has had to face several important challenges in its quest to consolidate its position as a reference country for hosting global sports competitions. Although it has been successful in several instances, mentioned further in this literature review, the country has faced some setbacks to organize large-scale events due to lack of infrastructure, economic difficulties and political instability.

The accumulation of these challenges has affected not only the country's ability to organize high caliber sporting events but also its international image in terms of meeting international standards. This may have consequences in terms of the possibilities of receiving foreign investment in terms of sport and tourism in the future. However, these situations have also been used by the country as opportunities to reinforce planning and infrastructure management strategies around sports tourism in order to consolidate Colombia as a competent host.

One of the first significant cases was the resignation of Colombia as host of the FIFA World Cup in 1986. The country was selected as host in 1974 and infrastructure projects were put in place to meet FIFA's requirements which included “12 stadiums with a capacity of 40,000 spectators for the first round, four with a capacity of 60,000 for the second round and two with a capacity of 80,000 for the final matches” (‘Mundial Colombia 1986’: Las Razones De La Renuncia a Organizar La Copa Del Mundo”, 2022), in addition to demands that at the time were considered “extravagant” such as the granting of a communication tower in Bogota, the freezing of hotel rates and the possibility of circulating several currencies in the country. It is worth noting that at the time Colombia presented itself to FIFA with only 5 stadiums in 5 different cities, one of which began construction only in 1979.

According to Felipe Raymond (2021) these demands were delivered in a “Charge Book” after FIFA's suspicions that holding the event in Colombia could tarnish the image of the organization due to lack of preparation. As a consequence, on October 25, 1982, the then president of the country, Belisario Betancur, announced the country's resignation as host and said that “the golden rule was not fulfilled, which is that the World Cup should serve Colombia and not Colombia should serve the multinational of the World Cup. Here we have other things to do, and there is not even time to attend to the extravagances of FIFA and its partners” (Raymond, 2021). This unleashed a barrage of criticism where the one that stood out the most according to Felipe (2021) was that the World Cup could have been a gateway to development that would bring schools, hospitals and roads.

Likewise, one of the most recent setbacks to highlight is the loss of the rights to host the 2027 Pan American Games. This decision was taken by Panam Sports (governing body) due to “innumerable breaches of the current contract” (The City Paper, 2024) derived mainly from a lack of economic resources and the non-fulfillment of considerable infrastructure commitments even when the country was granted an extension. This event not only tarnished the country's reputation as host but also generated criticism and political tension between the local government of Barranquilla (the city that would have hosted the games) and the national government over the management of resources.

2.3 Overview of Colombian Sports Today

2.3.1 Establishment of The National Sports System and The Ministry of Sports

As of law 181 of January 18, 1995, the provisions on sports, recreation, leisure time and physical education were enacted and the National Sports System was created (MinEducacion, 2024). According to article 1, the general objectives of this law are:

Sponsorship, encouragement, massification, dissemination, planning, coordination, execution and advice on the practice of sports, recreation and the use of free time and the promotion of extracurricular education of children and youth at all levels and social strata of the country, in the development of the right of all personas to exercise free access to adequate physical and spiritual training. Likewise, the implementation and promotion of physical education to contribute to the integral formation of the person at all ages and facilitate the effective fulfillment of their obligations as member of society.

(MinEducacion, 2024)

In the same way, the special objective of this Law is the creation of the National Systema of Sports, recreation, the use of free time, extracurricular education and physical education.

Accordingly, article 3 refers to:

guaranteeing the access of the individual and the community to the knowledge and practice of sports, recreation and the use of free time, the State will take into account coordinating, promoting, formulating and executing special programs for physical education and sports in general and competitive and high-performance sports, ensuring that they are developed in accordance with the principles of the Olympic movement.

(MinEducacion, 2024).

In like manner, Law 1967 of July 11, 2019, the Ministry of Sport is formed with the commitment to formulate, coordinate and implement policies, programs and projects in the field of sport, recreation and physical activity. In this order of ideas, The Ministry has the mission to:

“Formulate, lead and guide an efficient inclusive and innovative policy for sport, recreation, physical activity, recreational and sports infrastructure, and the use of free time contributing to education, welfare and quality of life of people and exercise inspection, surveillance and control, within the framework of the National Sports System and the guarantee of the rights of people to practice the activities of the sector.” (Ministry of Sport, 2024).

And the vision that “by the year 2032 the Ministry of Sport will be a platform for transformation and social education through the development of sport, high performance, recreation, physical activity and the use of leisure time” (Ministry of Sport; 2024).

2.3.2 Role of the Olympic and Paralympic Comities

It is worth noting the Colombian Olympic Committee founded in 1936. It was recognized by the International Olympic Committee on April 9, 1948. 84 years of history have passed since its foundation. Eighty-four years of history have passed since its foundation (Colombian Olympic Committee, 2024).

According to the Olympic Values Program, the purpose is to provide the necessary assistance for the National Olympic Committees (NOC) to make the fundamental principles of Olympism a reality and fulfill the functions attributed to them in the Olympic Charter. That is to say; the promotion of sport for all and the fundamental principles and values of Olympism in

sport and education, guaranteeing equality of conditions without discrimination of any kind and promoting the health and integrity of the athletes (Colombian Olympic Committee, 2024).

Likewise, it is of utmost importance to highlight the I Paralympic Forum of the Americas, held in the framework of the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, sports leaders from Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and El Salvador, together with representatives of key organizations, discussed the main challenges in the development of inclusive sport in the region. Convened by the Americas Paralympic Committee (APC), the German Development Cooperation (GIZ), and the Embassy of Chile in France, the forum brought together in Paris close to 100 participants, including representatives of National Paralympic Committees, the private sector and diplomatic delegations (Colombian Olympic Committee, 2024).

According to Julio César Ávila, president of the Paralympic Committee of the Americas, when referring to inclusive multi-sport events, he commented that “for the Games to be a success, they must have the support of the state, cities and private companies. It is fundamental to open the doors to all countries and Para athletes, allowing them to demonstrate their talent and creating awareness to guarantee the success of these events.” (Colombian Olympic Committee, 2024).

This will result in a high participation of young talents and future athletes in all sports disciplines, whether they have a disability or not. Thus, with the last Paralympic Games, it could be seen that social programs have advanced in the country and have included the development of adapted sports with very good results and satisfaction for participants and their families as developed further in this review.

2.3.3 Growth and Achievements of Colombian Sports in the Last 30 Years

Sports at the national level have been on the rise in the last thirty years in many disciplines such as speed skating, BMX, weightlifting, athletics (long jump), tennis, road and track cycling, men's and women's soccer, among others. Different high-level athletes have participated in world championships and Olympic Games with praiseworthy presentations, reaching the podium and obtaining gold, silver and bronze medals in the various competitions.

It is noteworthy that the country has consolidated a very important role in international football by hosting events of high importance such as the 2011 FIFA U-20 Men's World Cup, which was thought as the perfect opportunity to present Bogotá as “a modern, cosmopolitan, inclusive, creative city, a cultural reference; as well as a safe, competitive and pleasant destination for visitors, investors, businessmen, talents and as a venue capable of successfully hosting major events of great international importance” (Portafolio, 2011).

Also, according to Colprensa (2015) the FIFA Futsal World Cup in 2016 took place in the country after the success of the aforementioned event, the national team's performance on the 2014 Brazil World Cup and the infrastructure development the country had for this sport. Ultimately, last September, Colombia hosted the U-20 women's world championship, where the national team reached the quarterfinals whilst the winning team was North Korea. The event was highlighted by Ramon Jesurum, President of the Colombian Football Federation, as “an event that will showcase our country on the global stage” (Rodriguez, 2024).

Moreover, Colombia's excellence is not limited to football; the country also excels in other sports like speed skating where the national team was crowned world champion of the discipline in Italy, 2024. It won more than twenty medals. And, it has reaffirmed its status as a world power in roller speed skating at the World Skate Games in Italy 2024. The Colombian

team won its 21st world track championship and won three new gold medals at the start of the road events (World Skate Games, 2024).

Among the most successful skaters are María Fernanda Timms, winner of three gold medals in the absolute category; or the youth skaters Yicel Camila Giraldo (three golds and one silver) and Dairy Londoño (one gold and two silvers), who ensure Colombia's good future in this discipline (World Skate Games, 2024).

Colombia's success in the World Skate Games 2024 is completed with three other bronze medals: one in skateboarding and two in figure skating. Olympian Jhancarlos Gonzalez won the first world medal in the history of Colombia in this sport with his bronze in the Street modality. Undoubtedly the best way to get rid of the bad taste in his mouth left by his performance at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. (World Skate Games, 2024).

In figure skating came two more bronzes: one in junior pair for Geraldine Gañán and Isaac Sotomayor, and another in junior dance pair for María Paula Muñoz and Jeshua Folleco.

In relation to the Paralympic Games, Colombia was awarded two gold medals, one silver, three bronze medals and five diplomas were obtained in athletics and swimming (Colombian Paralympic Committee, 2024).

Also, in the last Olympic Games, France 2024, only one silver medal was awarded in artistic gymnastics by Ángel Barajas and diplomas were obtained in race walking, swimming and weightlifting; which means an outstanding presentation. Undoubtedly, it is necessary for future competitions to improve and continue training and preparing for the next Games in 2028 and other global tournaments in the coming years.

Equally, it should be remembered that in 2019 the doubles pair in the tennis discipline won the Wimbledon tournament, the oldest and most prestigious at a global level, and also won the US Open in the United States (Grand Slam). And, in the same year, in cycling, Egan Bernal won the Tour de France trophy, the highest award in world cycling.

In this sense, it is imperative the commitment of the Ministry of Sports, a government entity of the Executive Power in charge of formulating, coordinating and executing policies, programs and projects related to sports, recreation and physical activity. (MinDeportes, 2024).

That said, it could be affirmed that Colombia has great sports scenarios in several disciplines in different cities of the country and they are the central axis of formation and training of many young people who start from an early age attending with dedication, commitment and discipline to the different sports fields.

The current government's roadmap frames “sports, recreation and physical activity play an important role in the construction of society”, which is structured under five transformations, and is aimed at the integral formation of Colombians based on the demands of the population regarding their fundamental right to practice and enjoy sports, recreation and physical activity (MinDeportes, 2024).

2.4 Tourism Development

According to León-Gómez et al. (2021) the travel and tourism sector prior to the pandemic had been growing steadily for the last six years and had established itself as “an indispensable engine of economic growth”. By 2019 the sector had a growth rate of 3.5% and, for example in the OECD, contributed to “4.4% of GDP, 6.9% of employment and 21.5% of the organization's exports. In addition, international tourist arrivals were higher than the global population, with 3.8% annual growth (OECD, 2024).

However, after the pandemic, it was one of the sectors most affected by the issue. Continuing with the example of the OECD, its contribution to GDP was reduced to 2.5% in 2020 and a consolidated improvement is only seen in 2022 with a figure of 3.9% (OECD, 2024). According to UN Tourism (2024) "international tourism ended 2023 at 88% of pre-pandemic levels" at a global scale after hitting US\$1.4 trillion in receipts in 2023.

On the same note, UN Tourism (n.d.) states that, “tourism can contribute, directly or indirectly, to all the objectives” of sustainable development. Specifically, they state that the sector has been included in the targets of goals 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 12 (Responsible consumption and production) and 14 (Life below water) showing its potential benefits in economic, social and environmental terms.

Looking ahead, in the Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024, Soshkin et al. (2024) mentions that “lack of economic opportunity, unemployment and economic downturns” are the world's most pressing socio-economic risks. It states that this industry will remain “labor-intensive” due to its service nature and that the schedules managed by many of the companies within the industry promote vast opportunities for socio-economic prosperity. It is also known that tourism creates jobs, strengthens local economies and contributes to the development of local infrastructure (TOURISM an Opportunity for Sustainable Development, 2024).

With that in mind, the Travel & Tourism Development Index notes that the areas where stakeholders should focus include

(1) investment in a skilled, inclusive and resilient workforce and states that by doing so “the sector will be able to better use technology, improve service quality, boost productivity and expand its labor pool” (Soshkin et al, 2024).

(2) put local communities at the center of industry development by including and supporting vulnerable groups, directing efforts towards the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises, and coming up with new tourism plans that support the local community in terms of traditions and culture (Soshkin et al, 2024).

(3) begin to take responsibility for “visitor behavior and infrastructure development”. The report states that “investments and policies should focus on dispersing tourism to rural, natural areas and secondary locations with improved infrastructure and access” (Soshkin et al, 2024).

Finally, the report highlights how the sector can boost connectivity, peace and cultural exchange globally with two major strategies: first, increasing travel openness with visa and airline liberalization, and says that this has even helped to “internationalize the labor market” and “reduce travel prices, aviation capacity and service quality” (Soshkin et al, 2024).

Second, encouraging cultural exchange between travelers and local communities in the various destinations through policies that foster “authentic cultural experiences and interactions...around community-based tourism” (Soshkin et al, 2024), and highlighting the important role of involving local communities in the development of tourism.

2.5 Major Sporting Events on Tourism Development

2.5.1 Tourism Destination Development

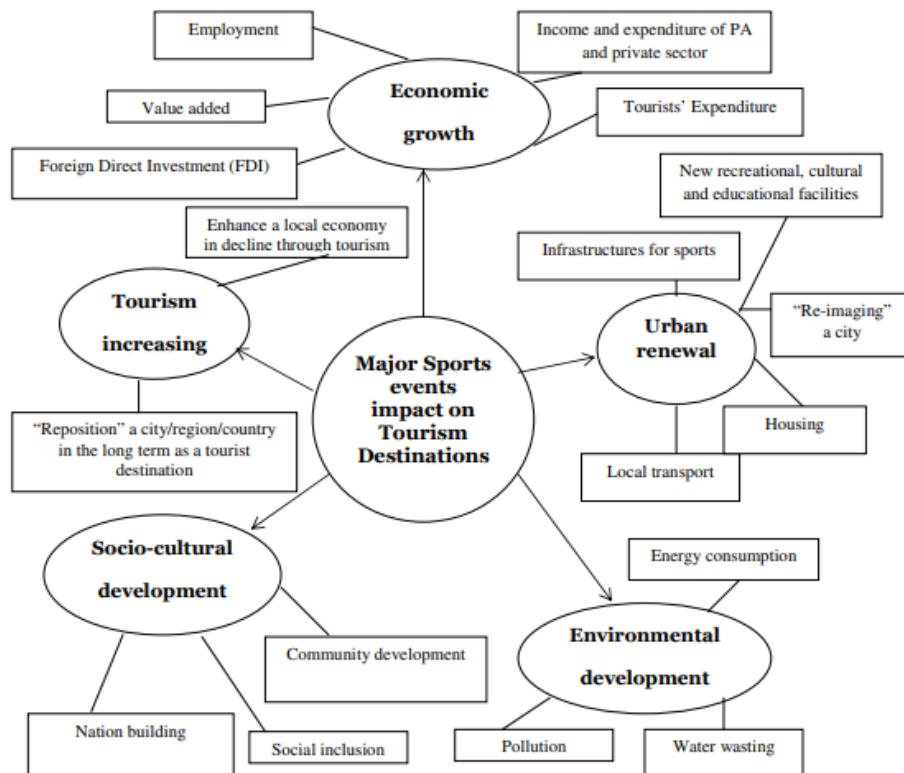
Over the past few decades, event-tourism (culture, sporting and business-related events) has become a rapidly expanding segment of the leisure travel market. The connection between sport and tourism is not new, and research has considered the rise of sporting events as one of the most significant components of event tourism and one of the most extensive elements of sporting tourism.

The growing use of sporting events is one of the current attempt's countries are incurring to expand economic development opportunities and achieve tourism growth (Tomino et al. 2020). Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing market segments in the tourism industry (Hritz, N., & Ross, C. 2010) and is receiving increased attention for its social, environmental, and economic impacts upon destinations.

A growing number of destinations are utilizing sport events as a strategic tool for revitalizing and re-qualifying themselves. As seen on Figure 1 sport events can have different implications for host destinations: from fostering an economic and social urban “regeneration”, to putting a city on a worldwide tourist map, or even changing the unequal participation of a country in the global economy.

Figure 2.

Key indicators for a tourism destination development



Note. The above graph shows the impact of Major Sport Events on tourist destinations. Taken from Zagnoli, P., & Radicchi, E. (2009). Do major sports events enhance tourism destinations? *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research*, 47(1), 44-63.

Chalip & Costa (2005) state that events are being used to “build the brand of their host destinations”. There are different roles that events can pursue relative to the destination brand, these include (1) co-branding, (2) extensions and (3) features.

2.5.2 Impact of Major Sporting Events on Tourism Development

The Covid-19 pandemic has almost completely reshaped the organization of sporting events as mentioned by Bazzanella et al. (2023), however they state that it is not clear in the long-term effects for mega events like the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games. In the same way, another uncertainty is the role of positive change played by this type of events and the

implications in the general tourism of host countries either by achieving social, environmental or economic developments

Bearing this in mind, it is important to perform a deeper analysis in the impact before, during and after a large-scale event such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games. The international tourism effect Vierhaus (2019), of the organization of the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup, the organization and, to a lesser extent, the presentation of bids for the Summer Olympic Games significantly increase international tourist arrivals before, during and after the event. In contrast, the FIFA World Cup has proven a lack of effectiveness in promoting local tourism. Similarly, the Winter Olympics show a small positive tourism legacy at the country level. (Vierhaus, C, 2019).

In comparison, the most recent World Cups, Russia in 2018 and Qatar in 2022, have focused mainly on economic benefits not related with tourism and improving the country's image. Recently, only South Africa in 2010 and Brazil in 2014 have set an active target to promote international tourism. However, apart from hosting the World Cup to attract tourists and relying on media effects, little is known about their tourism promotion strategies after the mega events.

It is noted that the hosting of major sporting events boosts international tourism because of the enhanced global media coverage that increases awareness and image perception. (Essex and Chalkley, 1998; Faulkner et al., 2000; Getz, 2008; Gibson et al., 2008). However, “fans who travel to watch the FIFA World Cup are mainly concerned with the atmosphere and the football itself, while the actual host has little to do with the attractiveness of the destination” (Florek et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2005) which suggest that this awareness does not go beyond the scenery of the sport event and does not settle as a long-term consequence. Likewise, Holtzhausen and

Fullerton (2013) state that in the long term, “the world championship will not do much to promote tourism, although international tourism increased in the year of the event, this increase was offset by a decrease in tourism 1-4 years after the event”.

Likewise, to say that this type of event does not have a direct impact on the image of the region, country or host city (Ratkowski, W., & Ratkowska, J. 2018) would be to contradict the data mentioned. The SEs¹ are an important factor in the development of the regions, however their success and effectiveness is linked to the responsibility of host destinations to use their cultural, social and economic factors in the creation of short- and long-term strategies that guarantee the full utilization of the investments these type of events require.

This is due to the fact that, “a good organization of an event is linked to the venue, the accessibility, the tradition of the event, the time of the event, the duration of the event and the package that is offered to the visitors” (Ratkowski, W., & Ratkowska, J. 2018), because it is not the same an event that lasts a couple days compared to an event that lasts a month so it is reasonable to establish a plan that attracts tourists from different parts of both the same country and internationally.

Additionally, Tomino et al. (2020) state that the impacts of sporting tourism will depend on “the achieved level of development, numbers of sport tourists, size of local community, level of development and investment in other tourist activities, and if the local community accepts the hosting of sports tourism and sporting events”. If the local community has a low level of

¹ SEs in this context is the abbreviation of sporting events

development, it implies the import of products and services from other regions of the country or other countries which result in a decreased economic input.

As examples we can consider according to Cornelissen (2009), “while the 1998 World Cup evoked voluminous increases in tourist arrivals for France in the year of the event, the tournaments held in Japan and South Korea 2002 and Germany 2006 witnessed an important decrease in tourism. (...) It would seem as if the principal gain for Germany in hosting the tournament was a greatly improved international image”.

2.5.3 Benefits from Hosting Sport Events

Research has shown that hosting major sporting events can have a positive impact on tourism development with factors like visitor attraction, revenue generation and international awareness of the host destination. Studies such as Hall's (1992) research on the economic impact of mega-events and Ritchie and Adair's (2004) analysis of destination image and event tourism have highlighted the significant role that sporting events play in driving tourism growth.

“The results on sporting event impacts confirmed previous assertions that most of the focus was on positive as well as economic impacts” (Tomino et al. 2020). The results show that economic impacts are mostly positive and mainly economic including infrastructure investment, employment opportunities, increased tourism and tax revenue. Other impacts that are highly valued are the improvement of destination image and increased awareness in the international marketplace that overall provide a well-established position and benefits from tourism (Ritchie, J. R. B., & Smith, B. H, 1991).

For example, Hritz & Ross (2010) concluded that in Indiana, “social and economic benefits were strong predictors for support for further sport tourism development revealing a strong

identification with the advantages of sport tourism in their city such as an increased cultural identity and social interaction opportunities”.

2.5.4 Challenges for Hosting Sport Events

Megaevents require expensive investments in sport facilities, as well as in nonsport city-related infrastructure like hotels, transportation, local stores and restaurants. These investments must fit into the city’s long-term plan to make the event economically successful. (Solberg, H. A., & Preuss, H. 2007)

In addition, as participants and visitors who attend major sport events come from all over the world, venues have to be accessible and “it is often preferred that host cities can be easily reachable from different parts of the world—so locations which are more distant rarely enter the final bidding stages.” (Tomino et al. 2020)

Whilst hosting major sport events has proven to have positive effects on tourism demand shifts on the long-term, it is also known that the “additional” revenues that have been mentioned “might not counterbalance the investment costs that are required” to actually make the events happen (Solberg, H. A., & Preuss, H. 2007). This is why whether positive shifts have actually occurred cannot be measured relying only on counting the additional number of tourists that arrived to the country but other factors and comparisons must be taken into account.

Finally, as Hallmann & Breuer (2010) concluded that “international image serves only as a predictor for future visits to the destination”. On the contrary, sport event image and destination image influence future visits to both the destination and the sport event.

3. Methodology

This chapter explains the guidelines carried out to follow the course of collecting sufficient and necessary information. This process highlights the path of methodological rigor, highlights the researcher's forged question, and determines the sufficient resource, i.e., the type of approach needed to complete an accurate assessment of the research topic.

3.1 Objective

The aim is to be able to confirm the literature review in order to create a recommendation plan based on the findings of the subjects for Colombia, focused on the context of the study, with which it is hoped that in the future there will be the possibility of creating a detailed research instrument that can be applied to different countries in the world, as well as that the country (Colombia) can implement some of the recommendations that will be given in this paper.

3.2 Justification

This methodology was chosen because it is important to know the perspective of people inside and outside the Colombian context, as well as to know first-hand their opinion and perspective on this particular issue. In the same way, the insights that can be gathered can be directly contrasted with the methodology to confirm the literature review.

It is clear to recognize that by means of surveys it is possible to cover the largest possible population and thus get to know the general perspective of different people, however, this method can fall into redundancy and generate confusion at the time of the analysis of the data obtained. The selected methodology seeks to find out from authoritative voices which tools should be recommended.

3.3 Type of Investigation

The different processes involved in this research and considering ‘a methodology as a way of thinking about social reality and the relevance of studying it in the field of social sciences [...] can be conceived [...] as a way of acquiring knowledge about the social world’ (Corbin and Strauss, 2002), the general approach of the work is framed in a qualitative study.

Also, ‘commonly known as grounded theory’, originally designed by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987,

cited by Strauss and Corbin, 2002). What this means is that ‘the value of the methodology we will now describe lies in its ability not only to generate theory, but also to ground it in data. Both theory and data analysis require interpretation, but at least it is interpretation based on enquiry that is carried out in a systematic way’.

In this order of ideas, according to Rodríguez Gómez, D and Valldeoriola Roquet, J (2009), the qualitative approach ‘is oriented towards the understanding of unique situations and particularities, they focus on the search for meaning and sense given to the facts, to the agents themselves, and on how they live and experience certain phenomena or experiences of the individuals or social groups that we investigate’.

It is important to insist, according to these authors, that qualitative studies ‘are interested in the concrete experience in its natural and historical context, in the interpretations and meanings attributed to a particular culture (or subculture), in the values and feelings that originate from it. In other words, they are interested in ‘reality’ as it is interpreted by the subjects, respecting the context in which this ‘social reality’ is constructed.

As mentioned above, the type of research that will be implemented in this paper is qualitative research, because it is an area that has been little explored. This type of research was chosen because we want to understand the phenomenon in depth in order to understand or explain the behavior, motivations and characteristics surrounding the business problem.

3.4 Research Design

According to Hernández Sampieri; Fernández Collado and Baptista L; (2014)

“exploratory studies are carried out when the objective is to examine a topic or research problem that has not been studied much, or which has not been addressed before. That is, when the literature review revealed that there are only unresearched guidelines and ideas vaguely related to the study problem, or if we wish to investigate topics and areas from new perspectives”.

Furthermore, the authors cited above state that ‘exploratory studies serve to familiarize ourselves with relatively unknown phenomena, to obtain information about the possibility of carrying out a more complete investigation of a particular context, to investigate new problems [...] for future research, or to suggest assertions and postulates.

The research will have an exploratory approach because, as the name suggests, the aim is to explore as well as to deepen the understanding and explanation of the phenomenon through the opinions of the research subjects as well as through the literature review.

In addition, the aim is to be able to find common ground through the interviews in order to arrive at a formal solution or proposal for the Business Problem. Also, as it is a little studied phenomenon, it can be investigated and hypotheses can be formed for future projects related to this area of research.

This design was chosen due, in the first place, to the lack of available resources, i.e., being a little studied area and with little data, there is no clear basis on which it can be supported. Therefore, through exploration, it is possible to understand the behavior of the phenomenon, in

the same way, due to the research question, an exploratory method is flexible and adaptable to under-studied phenomena.

It is hoped that through this design, a clear and concise answer to the problem question can be given, not only as a way to generate insights focused on the country in question, but also to serve as an example for those other countries or regions, which present a similarity with Colombia, which can put into practice the findings and create a robust area of research into the phenomenon to lay a foundation for exploration towards future projects.

Compared to other designs, the selected design has advantages when it comes to data collection and analysis because, as mentioned above, it is a flexible method that allows for adapting the data collection and analysis according to the object and objective of the study, and the methods (interviews, focus groups, etc.) offer a wide range of options for implementing the study.

3.5 Participants

The sample for this study was non-probabilistic, by convenience and by judgement or purposive, because individuals were selected who are most readily available or accessible as well as based on their knowledge and judgement as to who are best suited to provide relevant information, so in this case people were selected who meet specific criteria or who are experts in

the area in question such as tourism, hospitality, events and sports. Participants of different nationalities were considered, with Colombia as the main nationality, in order to be able to assess the national and international perspective of the country in question.

The study participants are divided into:

1. Paul Garcia Nicoli. Procurement Manager EF Tours | Former student and currently Professor Rennes School of Business | Expert in Sports, Tourism and Hospitality.
2. Jorge Rios. Manager and CEO of TuBoleta Colombia | Expert in Events and Hospitality.
3. Gabriela Garzon. Master Student in Tourism and Hospitality | Expert in Tourism and Hospitality.
4. Andres Sierra. Colombian Journalist | Expert in Sports and Tourism.
5. José Miguel Leyva Docal. Co-Founder & Sport Specialist: Time for Senses. Expert in Tourism and Hospitality | Former student Rennes School of Business.
6. Juan Garcia. Colombian Journalist | Expert in Sports and Tourism.

3.6 Data Collection

For this research work, data collection was carried out through primary research by means of semi-structured interviews with the subjects of study from the different disciplines

mentioned above. It should be clarified that semi-structured interviews are those that are guided by a series of established questions, but through interaction with the subject a natural conversation is developed in order to spontaneously learn the perspective and opinion of the participants.

"Semi-structured interviews allow for greater flexibility in data collection, as they offer the opportunity to explore topics in depth, while maintaining a focused approach to key areas of interest. This type of interview combines the advantages of a guided structure with the possibility of pursuing new lines of enquiry that may arise during the conversation" (Bernard, 2006)

In this case the interviews were conducted virtually due to the location of both the researcher and the participants, and were conducted in English and Spanish, due to the ease of communication with specific participants to ensure the normal course of the interview, as well as to capture their opinions and perspectives directly.

The questionnaire is developed in 12 questions formulated in a coherent way to follow a thread in the interview and thus to start from the general to the particular or specific. Like the interviews, the questionnaire is available in English and Spanish, as it has been adapted for the study subjects in their mother tongue or professional language. (Refer to annex A).

4. Analysis & Results

In the same way as the research methodology, the analysis was carried out by qualitative methods, by means of inductive content analysis; as a first step the information was coded to break down the information into key words, according to the patterns found among the participants, diagrams were created in the form of concept maps accompanied by written recapitulations, to synthesize the information collected in each question.

This type of analysis was chosen because it is a qualitative technique designed to analyze unstructured data such as texts, documents or, as in this case, interviews, with the aim of identifying patterns or themes without starting from previous theories, thus generating interpretations that emerge directly from the data.

"Inductive content analysis is a suitable approach for analyzing unstructured qualitative data, such as texts or interviews, as it allows themes and patterns to emerge directly from the data without imposing predetermined categories or existing theories. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the underlying meanings in the data." (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

4.1 Results

In this section it is presented a conceptual map for each question of the questionnaire, in order to review the content of the question please refer to Annex A

Figure 3.

Question 1

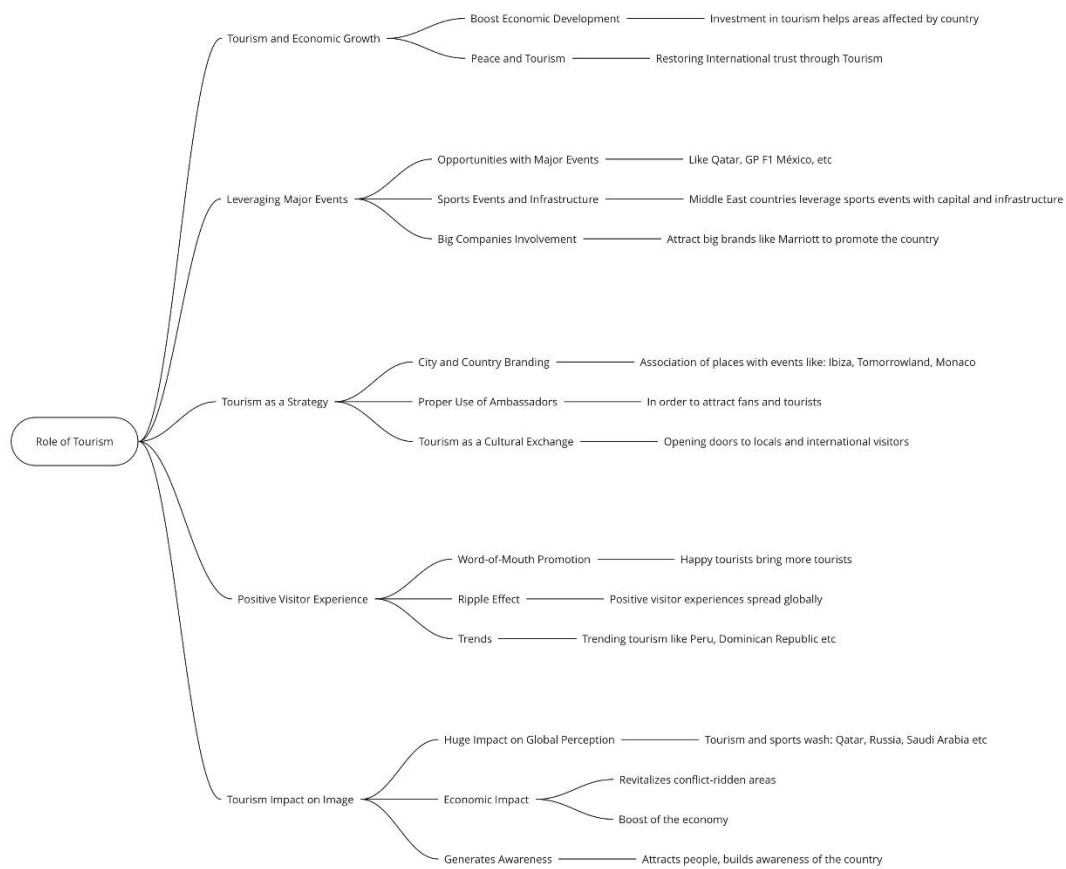


Note: Self-made

Colombia's image has evolved significantly, moving away from associations with drug traffic and violence, largely due to the success of international artists, athletes and the coffee export industry. However, outdated perceptions are still in the mind of people influenced by media (Netflix Series). The country is recognized for its cultural diversity and natural beauty but challenges remain in fully overcoming its past reputation.

Figure 4.

Question 2

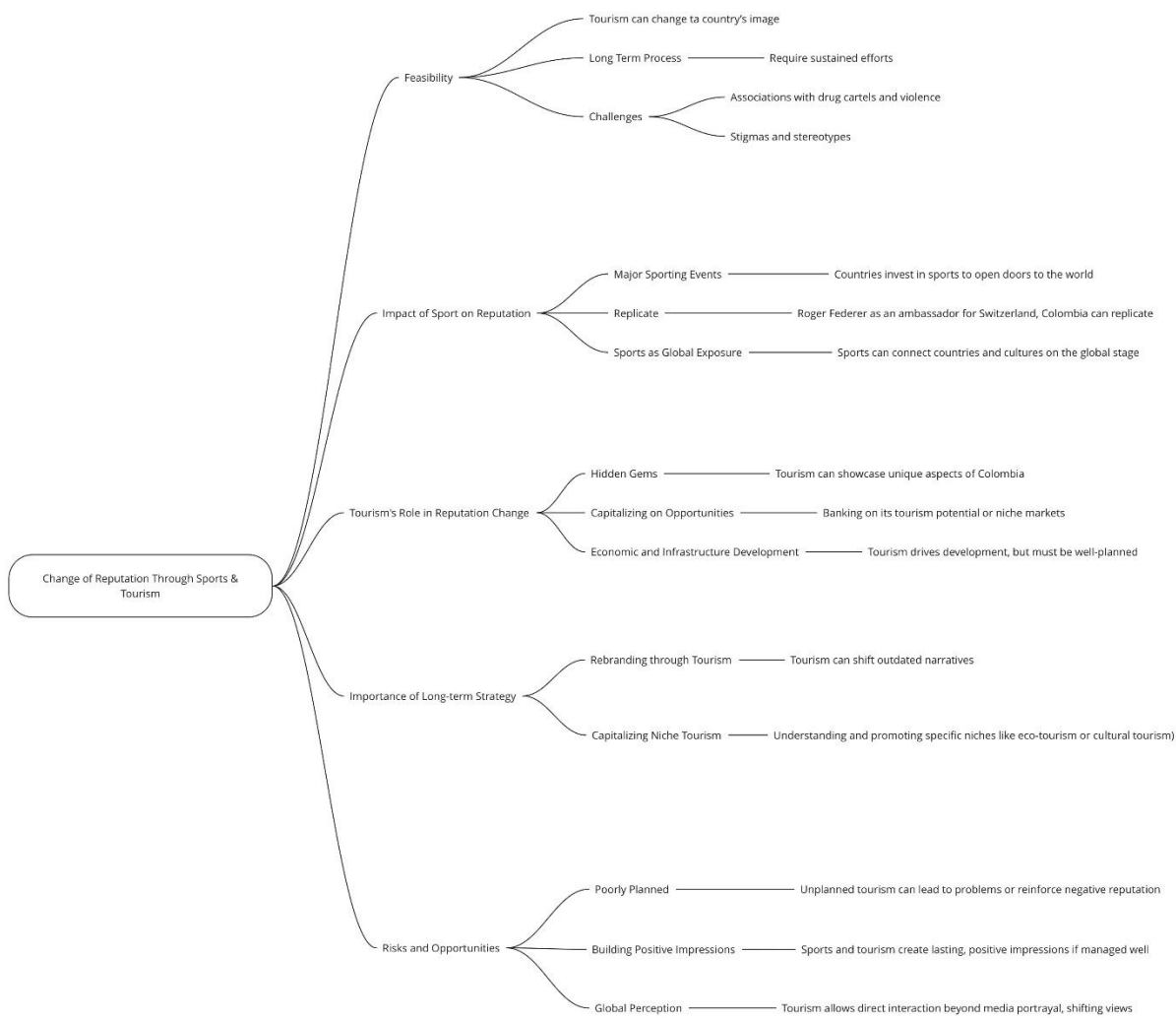


Note: Self-made

Tourism has a huge impact on a country's image. Positive experiences from tourists can lead to word-of-mouth promotion, enhancing perceptions globally. Successful sporting events can also serve as platforms to showcase what the country has to offer in cultural and natural aspects. Countries like South Africa and Brazil have used such events to promote their nation; Colombia could follow these examples focusing in md-level events and leveraging its cultural richness, however need to pay attention on why also these countries had problems after hosting major events.

Figure 5.

Question 3

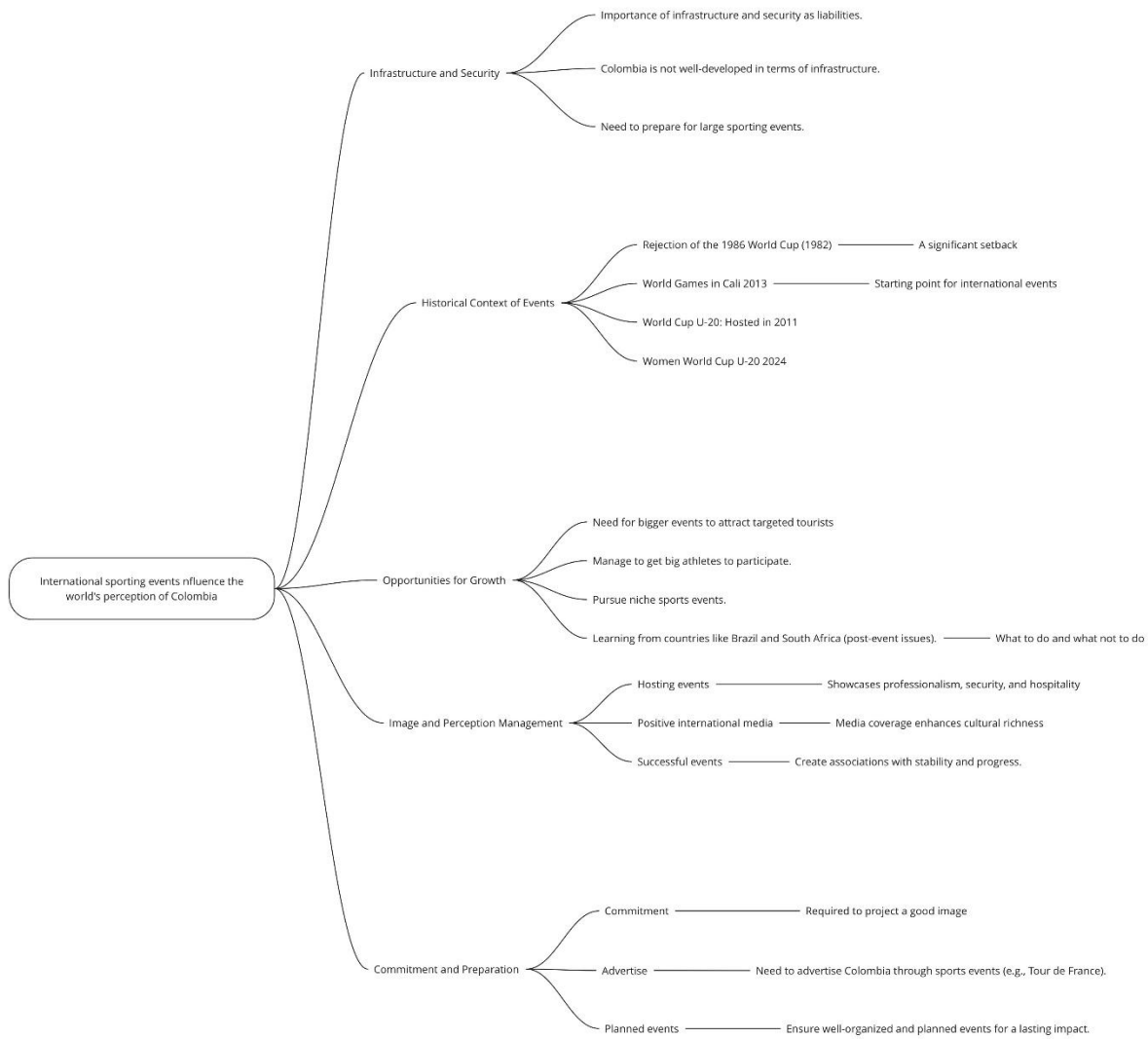


Note: Self-made

Changing a country's image through sports is possible but it requires a long-term commitment. While Colombia has the potential for it, it still faces challenges due to historical associations with drug trafficking. Successful examples from other countries show that strategic promotion through marketing and hosting events can help to improve and change perceptions as well as stereotype, however it requires a collaborative work from the citizens and the governments.

Figure 6.

Question 4



Note: Self-made

Infrastructure is a key aspect for hosting international sport events, the country must invest in modernizing and adapting its actual sport venues, improving transportation (like trains, public transportation and roads) and Hospitality services (Tour operators, Hotels, Hostels etc.) to meet the needs of the tourists and organizations. Colombia must review as well the cases of Brazil and South Africa on the positive and negative aspects in order to be prepared and created strategies to anticipate liabilities.

Figure 7.

Question 5



Note: Self-made

To improve its international image and reputation, Colombia needs to focus in developing regulations to generate policies towards protect tourism activities and ensure fair pricing for the visitors. Furthermore, the country should focus on host and develop niche sport events (hiking, cycling, skydiving) in order to bring the presence high-profile athletes to attract attention of the their and spectators of the sports. Additionally, promoting diverse tourism experience can contribute to change the image of Colombia.

Figure 8.

Question 6

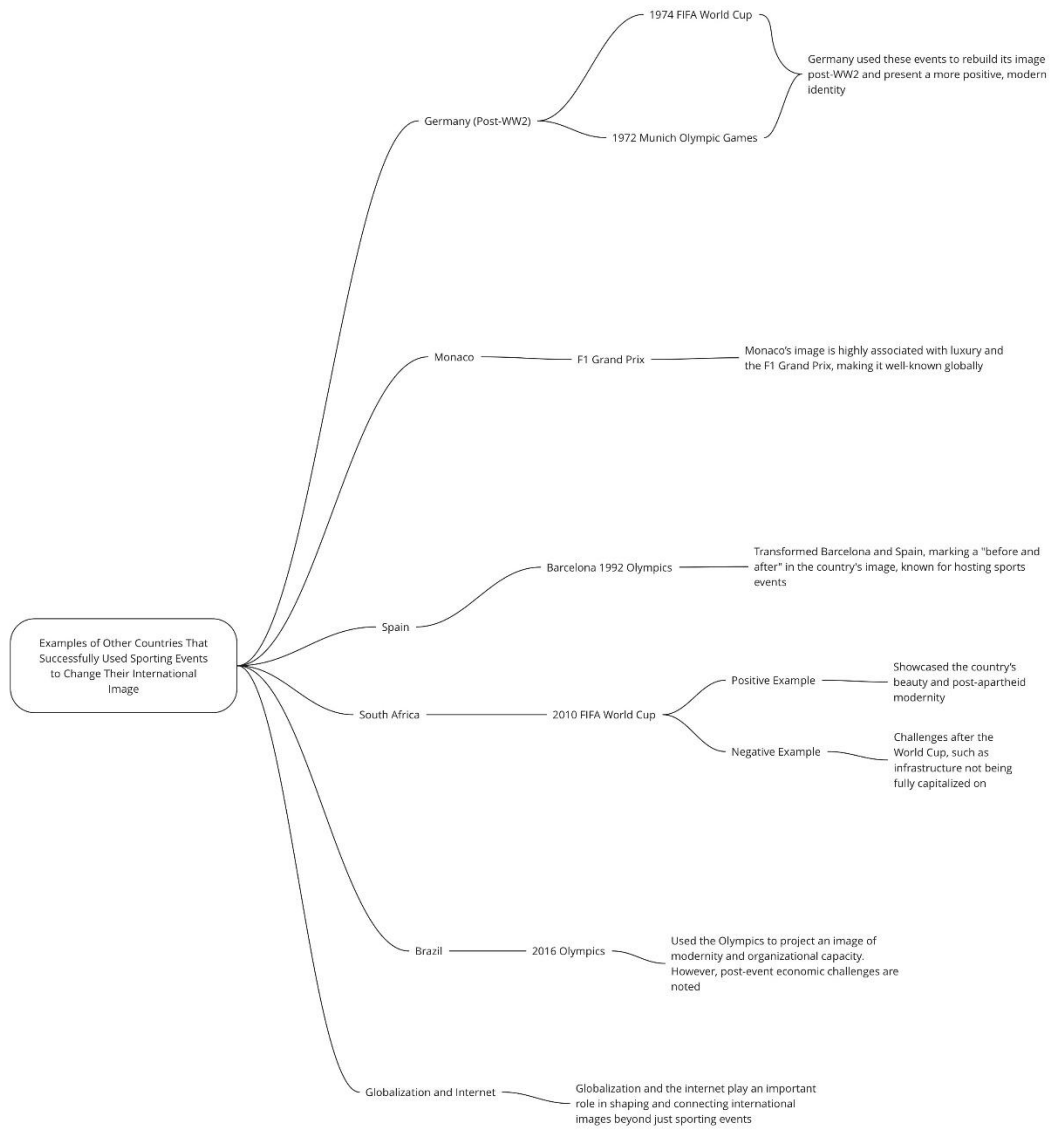


Note: Self-made

Events like the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup, and other popular sports in the country (Tennis, Formula 1, Cycling, Extreme Sports) can significantly attract tourists. Colombia should also consider mid-level events to build gradually a reputation and demonstrate its organizational performance. In addition, the country will need to be aware the market trends and focus on potential opportunities of NFL, NBA, Surfing and Amateur Events.

Figure 9.

Question 7

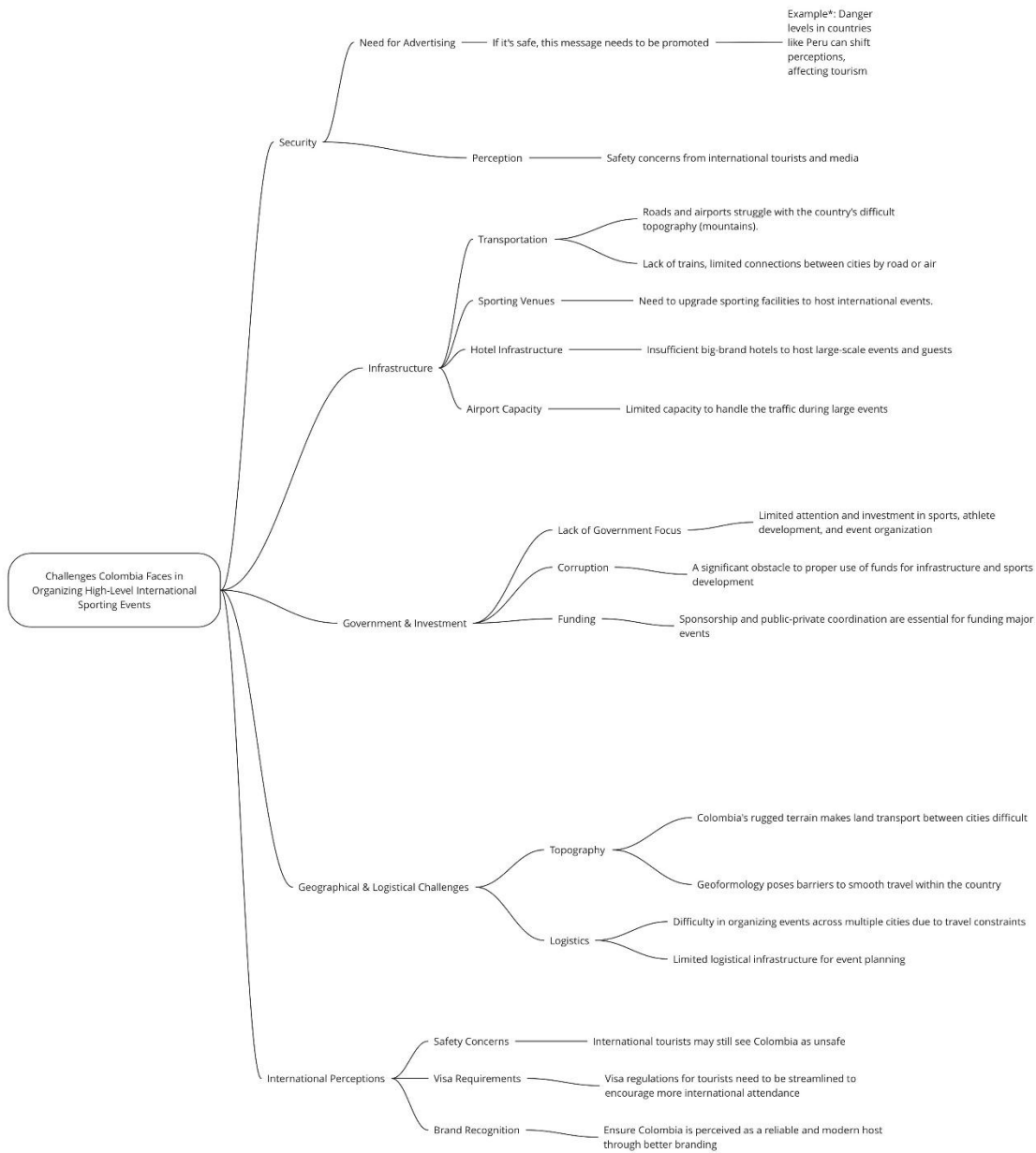


Note: Self-made

Countries like Germany (Hosting 1974 World Cup and Munich 1972 Olympics), Monaco (F1 GP), Spain (Barcelona 1992 Olympics), South Africa (2010 World Cup) and Brazil (2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics), are some examples on which Colombia can be based to study strategies and action plans on how to change the perspective of people towards a country, as well as to review what decisions or actions not to take and learn from the mistakes of others in order to be prepared and execute in an organized and successful way different sporting events.

Figure 10.

Question 8

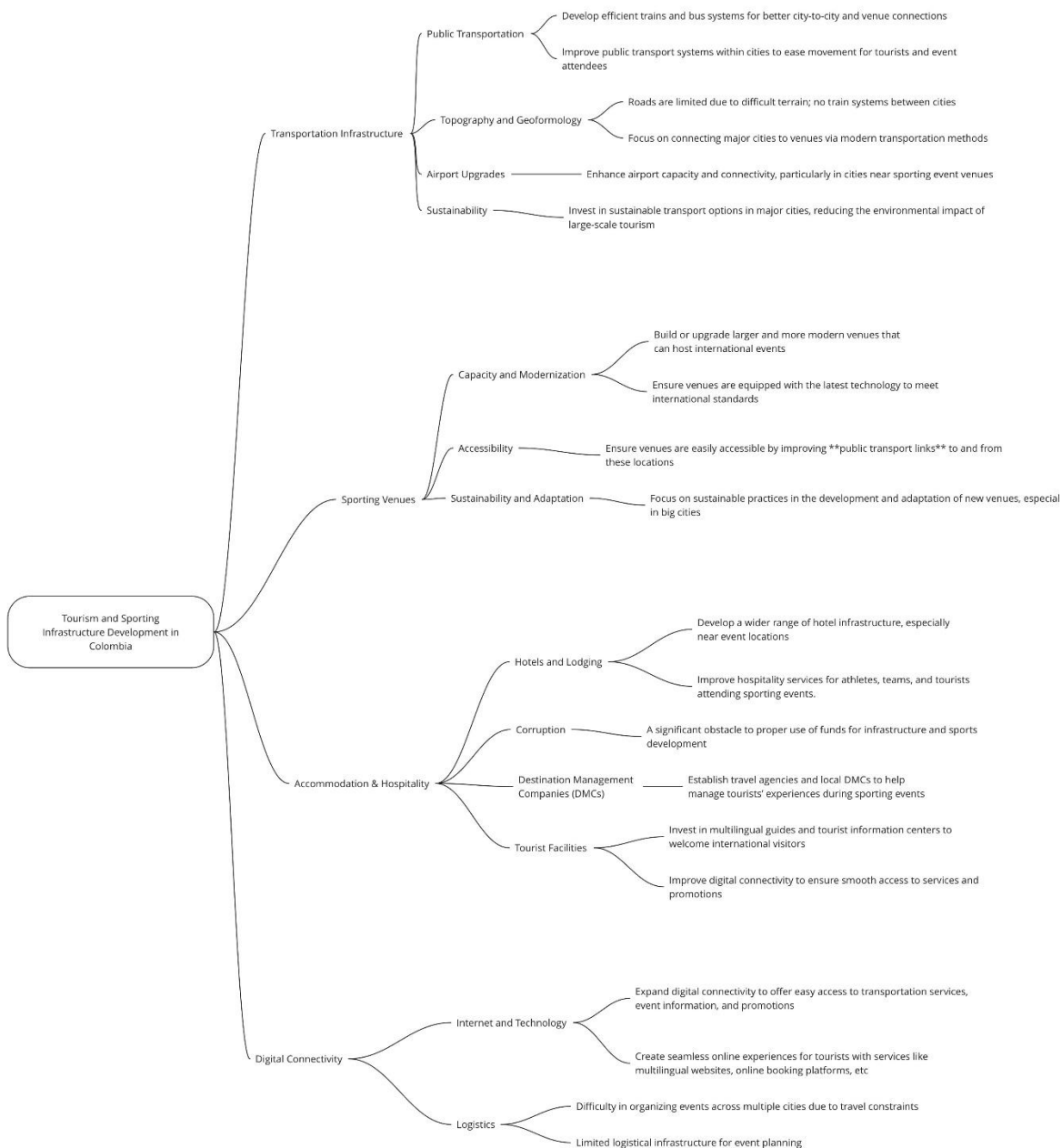


Note: Self-made

Colombia faces several challenges in hosting international sport events, including security concerns, international perception and regulatory (policies) issues due to the lack of investment and commitment from the different governments through the years. In addition, transportation network and infrastructure limitations due to its geography. The country should focus on improving the transportation and ensuring the creation of policies to address safety and regulatory concerns, these two aspects are important to organize major events and attract tourists.

Figure 11.

Question 9

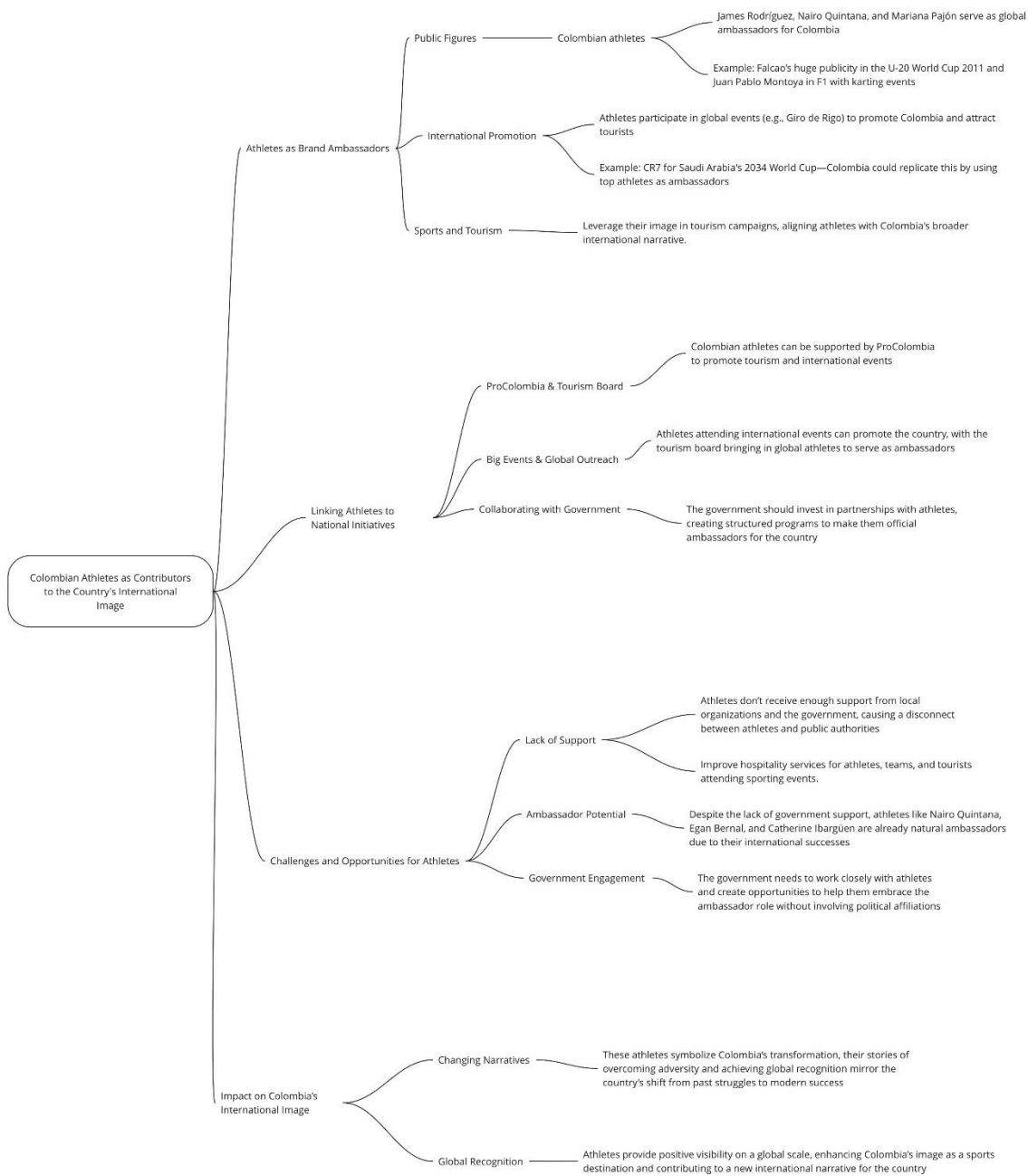


Note: Self-made

There are 4 key aspects in which Colombia should focus to improve in order to host international sport events. Transportation Infrastructure developing efficient system to connect the public transportation of each main city (also to sport venues) as well between cities. Sports Venues, build or upgrade larger and modern venues to meet the standard of the organizations. Accommodation and Hospitality, establish relationship with worldwide lodging providers and Destination Management Companies to develop a wider range of infrastructure in the country. Nevertheless, Digital Connectivity, is important to expand and enhance the connection and offer easy access to the tourist to information, promotions etc.

Figure 12.

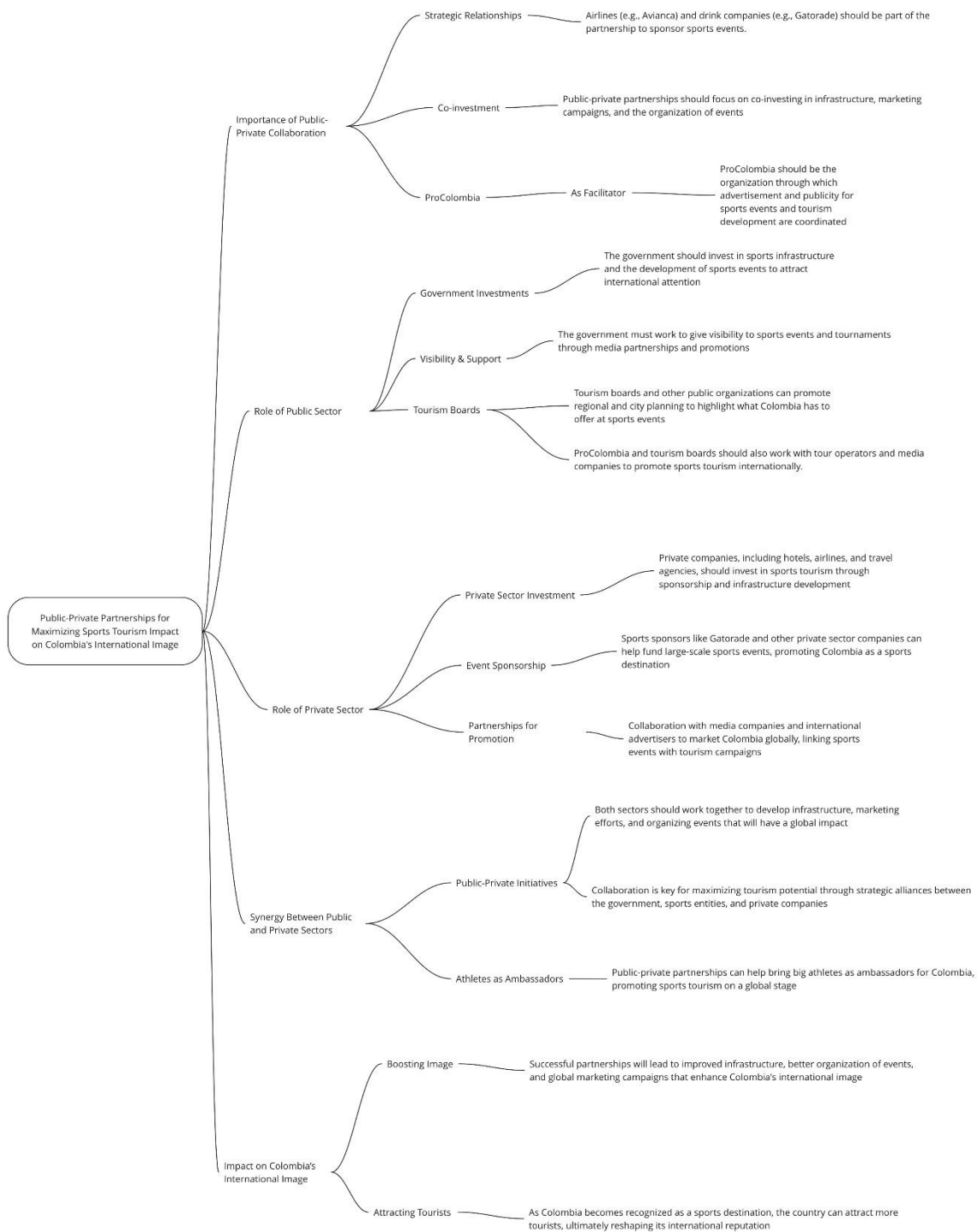
Question 10



In recent years different Colombian athletes have left the name of the country on the highest and principal international competitions, this has contributed continuously to improve the perception of the country, so athletes should be considered as ambassadors of the country at international level. Governments should start implementing action plans focused on representative figures as ambassadors in events or promotions, as well as improving economic and social investment in sport in the coming years.

Figure 13.

Question 11

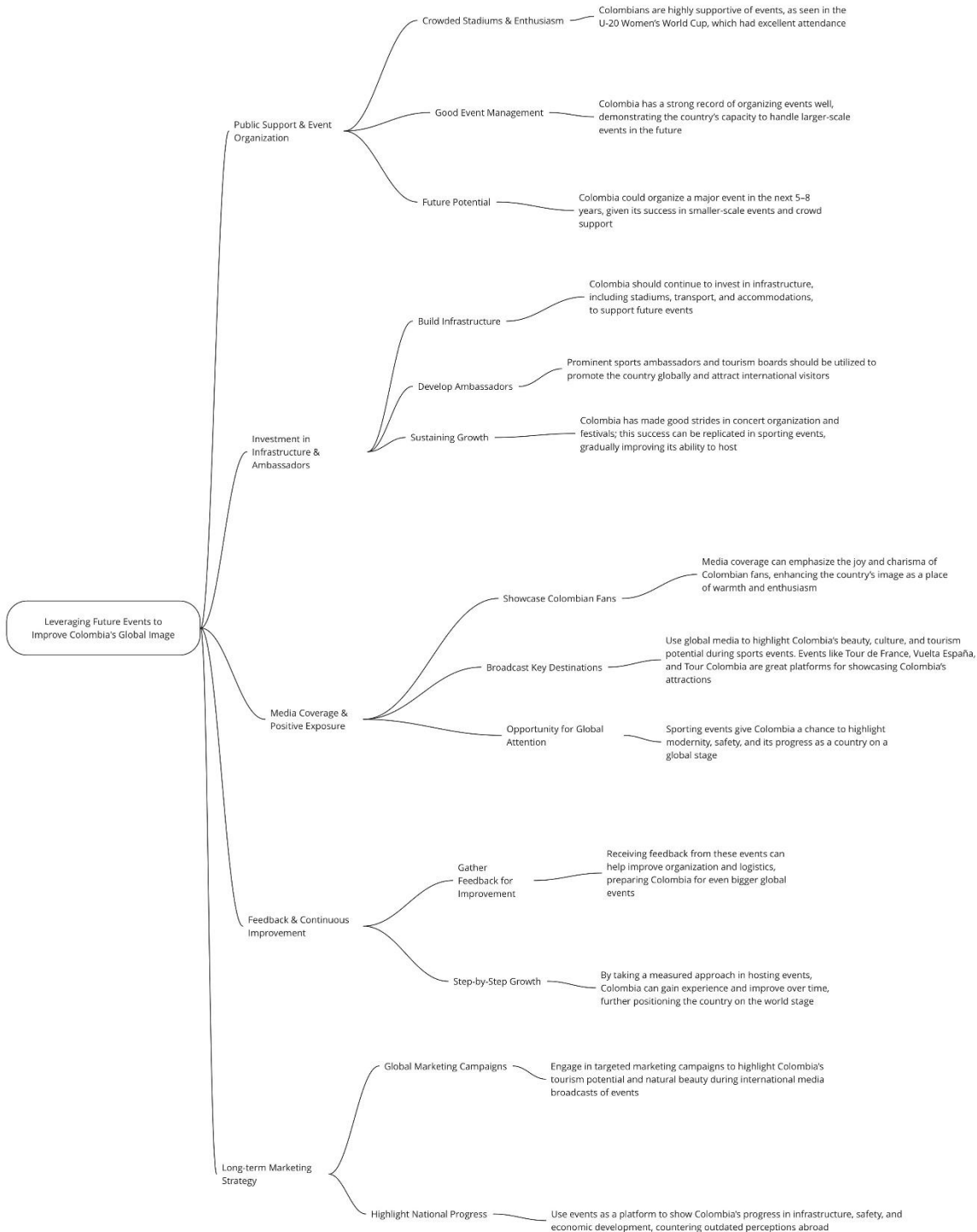


Note: Self-made

The roles of both public and private sectors must be addressed to accomplish the same goals and objectives, that is boosting the image and attracting tourists. The synergy between these two sectors has to be present in collaborations for athletes as ambassadors, improving the infrastructure, promoting the country, organization of events among others. In addition, the role and investment of Procolombia needs to be increased as it's the organization in charge of the internationalization of the brand Colombia.

Figure 14.

Question 12



Note: Self-made

To be able to accomplish the goal of improving the global image, the country should focus on strategic marketing that highlights the cultural diversity, natural resources and the safety of the country (is safe). Colombia should continue organizing mid-level sport event towards the gain of experience and attract new kind of tourists to the country. However, the country needs to gather feedback from previous events and improving the infrastructure to enhance year by year and event by event. It is important to highlight Colombia has the potential to positioned itself as one of the best tourism places in the world.

5. Conclusions & Practical Recommendations

This section is divided into different categories in order to conclude each area of the investigation as per the objectives set at the beginning of the paper.

5.1 Image of Colombia

According to the results, Colombia is still strongly associated with the issues of drug trafficking and violence, this can be understood in several ways, first, the people interviewed are of a generation that grew up with the stereotypes and perspective that they had of the country internationally, on the other hand, the different television series and streaming platforms (Narcos Netflix among others).

This type of entertainment programs, which are highly successful worldwide, do not favor the country in its quest to move away from this type of perspective and stereotypes, in addition this contributes to the new generations growing up surrounded by an environment where Colombia is still recognized by this type of thoughts.

On the other hand, Colombia has changed its image in recent years through different types of cultural and artistic expression, being music and sports the highlights of the Colombian scene.

Artists such as Shakira, Juanes, Karol G, Maluma, J Balvin among others have been in the highest musical scene for several years, becoming recognized worldwide, performing official songs of sporting events as well as participating in the most important festivals or award galas around the world.

Likewise, sports have been an important part, athletes from different disciplines have left the name of the country high, including Radamel Falcao, Mariana Pajon, Egan Bernal, Nairo Quintana, Catherine Ibarguen, James Rodriguez among others. In each sport they have obtained individual and group recognitions where, from an international point of view, the country where they come from and which they represent is exalted.

Colombia has the potential to be recognized for other types of phenomena, a country where its natural wealth is extensive, being the most biodiverse country per square meter in the world, as well as being the place with more presence of different species of birds in the world. Besides having different parks and natural reserves, the country also has different biomes and ecosystems that allow for different types of fauna and flora.

For all the above mentioned, the country has a long list of reasons why it can be recognized worldwide, which through a good work and project in collaboration of the different actors involved can become a reality.

5.2 Influence of Tourism and Sport Events

Tourism and sport events can influence the international image/reputation of a country in an important way, because the tourists that a place welcome will always return home with the image and impression they had during their trip, so a good experience can transform into a happy customer that will actively recommend the experience, but in the same way it has a negative impact if there is a bad experience. As per (Kaplanidou, K. et al 2012) “Hosting recurring sport events can be a solution for tourism development resulting in destination loyalty and higher place attachment levels”.

It can be a strong economic activity for the country, as it may exist a relevance to the world of business, because private companies can put an eye in Colombia and invest for a long-term return of the investment as well as for local companies and organizations, there can exist a huge improvement for the local economy and the creation of new jobs due to the need of labor force.

In addition, restoring international trust through tourism is possible opening doors to international visitors that encourage the cultural exchange as well as sharing the real image of the country that changes people's perceptions and stereotypes about a particular subject. Colombia should take in account as well the power of the word-of-mouth promotion and ripple effect, because happy tourist bring more tourists and it always represent the best marketing strategy. “Larger-scale events are not possible without the support of the wider community—that is, the non-host community. This offers an ambience where the social interaction between the visitors and local population facilitates and develops a positive image of the destination”. (Tomino et al. 2020)

Nevertheless, take into account examples such as South Africa and Brazil in terms of what kind of decisions should be made and which ones should not, because it is useless to make a large investment if the opportunities are not capitalized afterwards. It must be taken into account that it must be a long-term project that requires the effort of several actors together to achieve the proposed objective, likewise it must have a good planning to avoid making mistakes that can trigger a bad image.

5.3 How to change the perspective of Colombia

On first basis, Colombia has to develop the tourism board in order to be prepared to sell the country to the big companies and organizations that will bring major spot events that lead tourist interest in the country in the same way, it has to promote better the country and develop a strategic advertising plan to reach the ideal markets and customers

One of the main pillars for the advertisement plan can be the use of ambassadors, Colombia has outstanding athletes that can be used as figures and key icons to “sell” the country and its events, taking as an example the collaboration between Roger Federer and the government of Switzerland.

Colombia needs to focus on keep hosting mid-level sporting events in order to gain experience and continuously improve its infrastructure, as well as through the feedback it can receive from each event, analyze the key points to be in continuous change and improvement.

Furthermore, the country should focus on niche sports that drives fans to travel a support their favorite sport or athlete, cyclist or drivers, such as the Giro de Rigo, which should be replicated as well as backed and supported by the government because they are a great opportunity to generate advertisement of the country through sport and sports figures.

In order to organize major sport events, an improvement in the infrastructure is fundamental, venues, means of transportation in the city and between cities must be improved, as well as expanding and renovating the hotel industry in the country to accommodate the large numbers of tourists and fans who would travel to the country.

On the other hand, the different policies of price regulation as well as the security of tourist places must be established in order to ensure a transparent and legal economic activity in order to be able to receive the different tourists and provide confidence and security.

However, it is important to emphasize that the country must stop exporting television series or material related to drug trafficking because there is nothing to be gained by making a social, cultural and economic investment if there are still organizations that profit from an era that should be forgotten.

Finally, as will be discussed below, there must be a constant collaboration between governments, public entities and the private sector seeking to work towards a defined common goal.

5.4 Government and State

The Colombian state has to make a strong commitment to the development of sports and in the country, this activity in recent years has represented a factor of vital importance in the international arena, positioning the country, thanks to its athletes, in the focus of the world of high competition sports. This is due to the fact that it is well known in the country, and due to complaints from the athletes themselves, the lack of economic and nominal support from the

government, the state and its different organizations. Sport is a constant promoter of the social, economic and cultural environment.

Likewise, the government needs to invest money in the infrastructure of country, in other words there must be an investment in the areas of:

- **Transportation:** Improve public transportation in the cities to develop a communication network between venues, hospitality facilities and entertainment venues, and invest in the country's road infrastructure to develop more efficient highways and roads to communicate Colombia's cities and regions.
- **Venues:** Build and improve (the ones that already exist) the different sports venues around the country, in order to improve the capacity of people, as well as their technology and adaptability to host different disciplines and events.
- **Sport:** Invest in social programs that actively encourage and support different communities to develop future athletes to compete around the world as well as support these groups socially and culturally.

In the same way, a common factor between the literature review and the results is the presence of Procolombia, which is the organization in charge of the country's image in the international arena; therefore, it is inferred that the role, role and influence of the organization should be greater, this entity should be the main pillar by which the state seeks to promote tourism and sporting events to the world.

This organization should focus on the creation of a strategy to attract new markets through a Tourism Board, where the country has to offer in terms of tourism and sporting events,

in the same way it can attract investments from private companies that believe in the project presented.

6. Limitations & Future Directions

The main limitation encountered in the study was finding study subjects, because many people who were contacted never confirmed their participation in the study or just wanted to ignore the contact attempts that were made.

Furthermore, not having the resources to access people in high positions within the country, who work in the areas covered (hospitality, events and sport), as well as officials associated with national companies (working for the image of Colombia, in this case as an example ProColombia) who know firsthand those strategies that are carried out to internationalize the brand of Colombia.

Due to the limitations of the methodology for this study, there may be a significant bias due to subjectivity in the selection of participants, and the focus of the study on Colombia may miss the general perspective of those individuals outside the national context who may offer a point of view not contemplated in the study or by the participants.

Likewise, due to the lack of a scientific model to carry out the study, the data analysis may lack depth, which it is hoped will be resolved in the coming years, where the data collected here can be analyzed and synthesized by a model adapted to the phenomenon described here.

In addition, there is a clear lack of research on this subject (Bazzanella, F., Schnitzer, M., Peters, M., & Bichler, B. F. 2023), “emphasizes the need to further explore specific aspects such as sustainability efforts, authenticity, the use of SEs as a mechanism to transform a destination into a tourist attraction, the event tourism experience from different perspectives (fans, active participants, volunteers, officials, media, sponsors, etc.), and media technology to enhance spectator experience and participation, fan engagement, e-sports and entertainment. Likewise, further research is needed to understand in depth the interaction between event image and destination image”.

As future directions we want that the person who has access to this research project, can take as a basis the findings found in the interviews to create an action plan with which Colombia can base a public and/or private policy in order to exploit the tourism of sporting events.

In the same way, it is recommended to make this work available to people and/or entities or organizations that are related to the sports, tourism and hospitality industry in Colombia so that they can have access to those ideas that people inside and outside the context of the country have to contribute towards the objective of continuing the economic, cultural and social development of the country.

It is also expected that the research process can continue to find more information through different experts who can contribute their knowledge in order to create an area of research focused on the tourism of sporting events.

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