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EXECUTIVE MASTERS IN SPORTS ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT



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Saudi Games:
The future of an inclusive, sustainable and prosperous
sporting sector for ALL in Saudi Arabia

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Acknowledgments

I am honored to share my journey as a Saudi woman who started as a professional equestrian, subsequently supported the transformation of the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation as a board member, and now proudly leads the organization of the Saudi Games. It fills me with immense pride to witness the progress and opportunities provided to women and youth in Saudi Arabia, enabling all of us to excel in diverse fields.

Given my background in equestrian sports, I developed a deep passion for sports events. Through determination and hard work, I have been able to leverage my skills and expertise to contribute to the successful organization of the largest multi sports event in the Kingdom, Saudi Games. Being part of such a significant sporting event allows me to not only showcase the capabilities of Saudi Arabia on a national and international stage, but also to empower and inspire other women to pursue their dreams in the sports field.

I am grateful for the support and encouragement that I have received throughout my journey and remain committed to continue to drive progress and inclusivity across the Saudi sports landscape.

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Abstract

The Saudi Games, a pivotal series of events within the framework of Saudi Arabia's National Sports Strategy, served as a groundbreaking multi-sport competition, igniting the nation's pursuit of becoming a renowned destination for major international sporting events such as the Asian Games in Riyadh in 2034 ('Riyadh 34').

This thesis examines the strategic planning, execution, and impact of the Saudi Games. Specifically analyzing the games' role in promoting sports excellence, enhancing the Kingdom's reputation globally, and fostering social progress. The study explores the meticulous selection of sports disciplines and the event's inclusive nature, empowering athletes of diverse backgrounds and abilities.

Drawing from key findings, the thesis highlights the games significant contributions to economic growth, the empowerment of women, and social inclusivity. Thus underlining the games' alignment with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Moreover, the thesis proposes strategic recommendations to further elevate future editions of Saudi Games, including initiatives to foster athlete development, boost media and marketing, and encourage closer engagement with the sport federations and the community.

The Saudi Games exemplify the country's commitment to creating a lasting sports legacy, promoting cultural understanding, and embracing sports as a catalyst for positive change and development in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 1: About the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has a rich history of sports dating back to the early days of the country. The Bedouin tribes that inhabited the Kingdom enjoyed traditional sports such as camel racing, falconry, and archery. With the discovery of oil in the 1930s, KSA began to modernize and western sports such as football, basketball, and track and field became more popular.

The following sections shine light upon how the geography and modern history of KSA, as well as its ever-changing demographics and economics, create the context in which Saudi sports are set.

1.1: Geography of KSA

KSA is the largest country in the Middle East, located on the Arabian Peninsula in Western Asia. It covers an area of approximately 2.15 million square kilometers (830,000 square miles), making it the 13th largest country in the world. The country is bordered by Jordan and Iraq to the north, Kuwait to the northeast, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates to the east, Oman to the southeast, and Yemen to the south (Saudi Arabia: a country study, 1993).

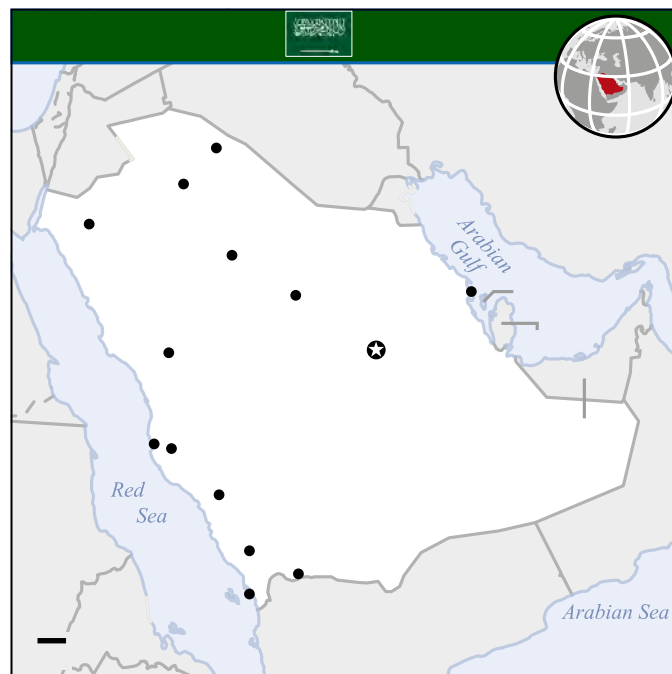


Figure 1 – KSA Geological map (Saudi Arabian locator map, 2013)

1.2: Social Reforms and Vision 2030 (2005-present)

Crown Prince Abdullah ascended to the throne as King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in 2005 following the 23 year reign of King Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud ¹ (Saudi Arabia | The Middle East Channel, 2013). The King implemented various social and economic reforms, including initiatives to promote women's rights. He launched the "King Abdullah Scholarship Program" which enabled thousands of Saudi students to study abroad in countries such as the US and UK, promoting education and skills development.



Figure 2 - Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (left) and King Salman (right), the current King of Saudi Arabia (Leadership message, 2016)

King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud became the King of KSA in 2015 after King Abdullah's passing. He appointed Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud as Crown Prince (Mohammed bin Salman named KSA's crown prince, 2017). Together, they introduced significant social reforms, including further advancements in women's rights, and launched the Vision 2030 (2016) plan to diversify the economy and reduce oil dependency while promoting social change. The Vision 2030 plan also outlined various policies to promote sports in KSA.

¹ Annex 1: A short history of KSA

1.3: Economics of KSA

KSA boasts the largest economy in the Middle East and the 18th largest globally, primarily fueled by its substantial oil reserves and membership in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. However, the government has been actively implementing economic diversification plans, aiming to reduce reliance on oil and develop sectors like manufacturing, construction, tourism, information technology, and finance (World Economic Outlook Database, 2022).



Figure 3 – Saudi GDP is composed of mostly oil related revenue, from which Vision 2030 tries to diversify (Simon Dawson/Bloomberg)

The Vision 2030 (2016) plan plays a crucial role in transforming the economy, promoting social and cultural reforms, and diversifying revenue streams. It includes initiatives such as privatizations, attracting foreign investments, developing tourism, and expanding non-oil sectors. KSA has invested heavily in infrastructure projects, including transportation, energy, and real estate. The investment is most notably observed with mega and giga projects like NEOM, Qiddiyah, and the Red Sea Development which are driving economic growth and enhancing tourism and entertainment.

The country has also made significant investments in the sporting sector to diversify the economy further and promote cultural and entertainment activities. Hosting international sporting events like Formula 1, Formula E, the Dakar Rally, and the Saudi Cup has showcased its capabilities and garnered global attention. Additionally, KSA has developed sports infrastructure, prioritized women's participation in sports, and focused on esports and professional sports leagues. The goal is to become a regional and global sports hub, boosting tourism and entertainment industries (Vision 2030, 2016).

The Saudi Olympic & Paralympic Committee (SOPC) oversees Saudi athletes' participation in international competitions and supports sports development through scholarships and training programs. Overall, these investments in the sporting sector align with KSA's broader economic diversification strategy and the promotion of a vibrant sports culture (History of the Saudi National Olympic Committee (2021).



Figure 4 – Saudi Arabia made its Winter Olympics debut in 2022 in Beijing, a testament to the investment and progress made by the country in recent decades (Associated Press, 2022)

1.4: Demographics of KSA

KSA's demographics are diverse and ever-changing, with a population of over 36 million people encompassing various ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. The country is experiencing an early transition to a more mature population, marked by an increasing life expectancy and declining fertility rates, which can have long-term impacts on the economy, labor market, health and social care, housing, and society (Saudi demographic trends, 2022).

To address the challenges posed by a maturing population, KSA has launched initiatives like Vision 2030 aimed at diversifying the economy and creating new job opportunities. The government is also investing in health and social care infrastructure to meet the needs of this changing population. The Ministry of Sports plays a role in promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing the incidence of non-communicable diseases through mass participation in sports (Sports and Non-Communicable Diseases, 2015).

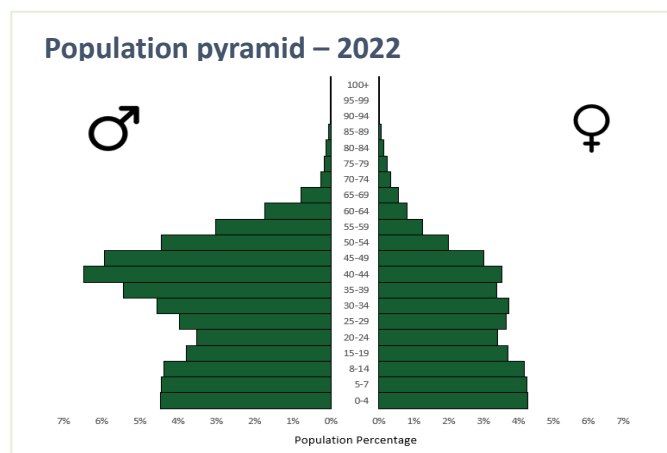


Figure 5 – Saudi Arabian population pyramid in 2022 (Saudi Population pyramids, 2022)

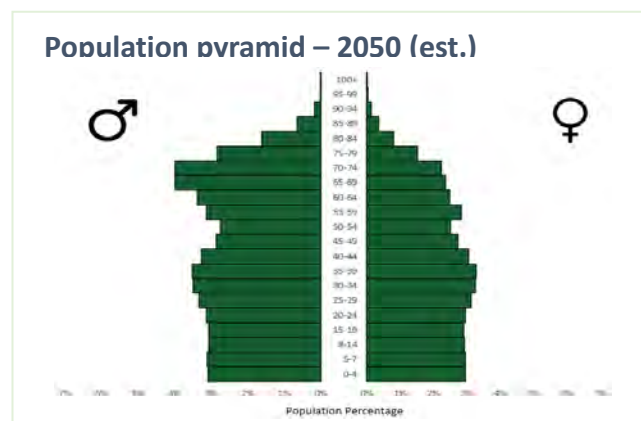


Figure 6 – Saudi Arabian expected population pyramid in 2050 (Saudi population pyramids, 2022)

Another significant demographic trend is the urbanization of the population, with the majority living in urban areas, putting pressure on infrastructure and

services. The rise of the middle class is also driving demand for goods and services, leading to a more diverse and tolerant society (Saudi demographic trends, 2022).

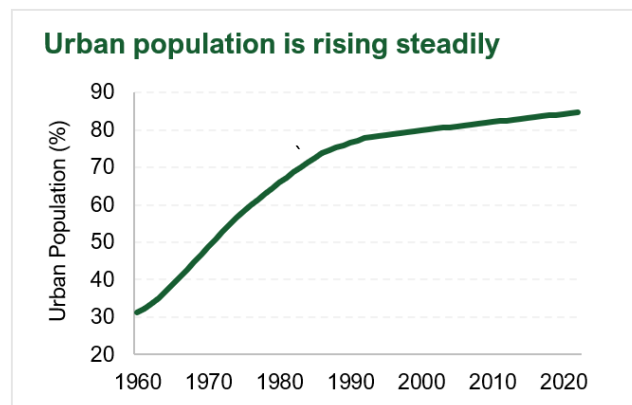


Figure 7 – Urbanization trend in KSA (World Bank, 2022)

Economic growth has increased the GDP per capita of Saudi Arabia to a robust \$30,000 annually (World Bank, 2022). Consequently, these shifts have not only influenced various aspects of life but have also left an indelible mark on the realm of sports. With a higher number of adults now benefiting from increased time and resources, they are empowered to actively engage in sporting activities. Moreover, the burgeoning middle class has rendered sports more accessible and affordable given their augmented disposable income for gym memberships, sporting equipment and attendance at sporting events. Furthermore, the proliferation of urbanized areas has contributed to the rise of sports facilities and expanded opportunities for physical activity, primarily concentrated within cities. With a population encompassing various ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds, the country embraces diversity and aims to provide equal opportunities for all to engage in sports and lead healthy lifestyles (Saudi demographic trends, 2022).

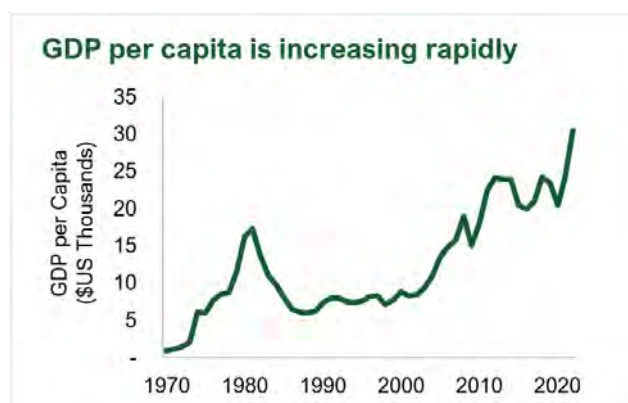


Figure 8 – GDP per capita in Saudi Arabia has rapidly increased to \$30,000 annually (World Bank, 2022)

This shift in demographics and societal values has paved the way for increased participation of sports enthusiasts across the nation, fostering a culture of inclusivity, well-being, and unity through sports. As Saudi Arabia continues to embrace diversity and equality, sports will remain a powerful platform to promote social cohesion and empower individuals of all backgrounds.

Chapter 2: KSA's Vision 2030

Vision 2030 (2016) is a long-term strategic plan introduced by KSA in 2016. It aims to transform the country's economy, society, and governance to reduce its dependence on oil, promote economic diversification, and create a vibrant and prosperous future. Within the Vision, sports play a critical role in achieving its goals.



Figure 9 – Vision 2030 is KSA's development strategy for the future

Vision 2030 (2016) is composed of three main pillars:

- A Vibrant Society
 - This pillar focuses on developing a vibrant society with a thriving culture and social values.
 - It aims to enhance the quality of life for citizens, foster social cohesion, and preserve KSA's cultural heritage.
- A Thriving Economy
 - This pillar emphasizes economic diversification, private sector growth, and increased investment opportunities.
 - The goal is to reduce KSA's dependence on oil revenue and develop a dynamic and globally competitive economy.
- An Ambitious Nation
 - This pillar focuses on strengthening KSA's position on the global stage through effective governance, efficient public services, and responsible fiscal management.
 - It aims to ensure the sustainable development of the country.

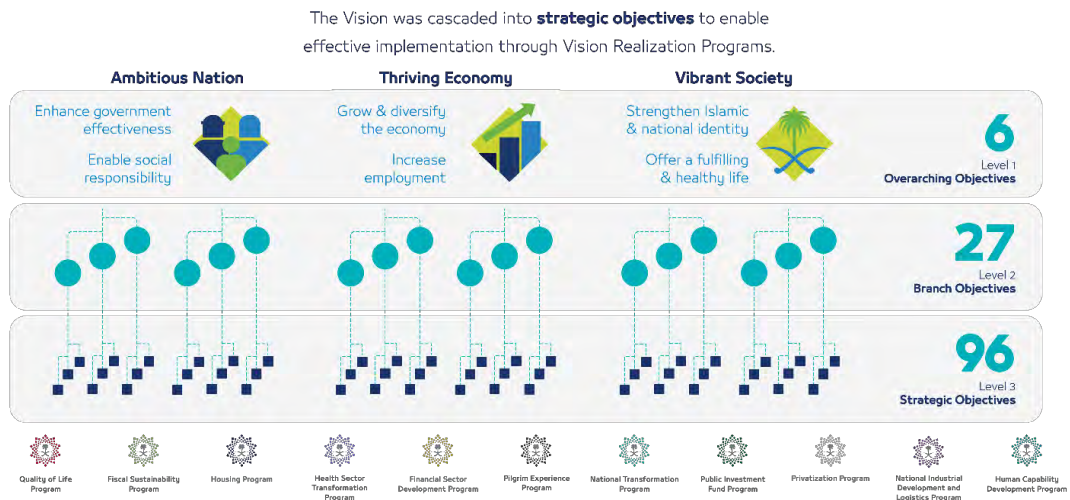


Figure 10 – Vision 2030 has 3 pillars, from which there are 27 branch objectives and 96 strategic objectives

Vision 2030 (2016) aims to transform KSA into a knowledge-based economy, fostering social well-being and establishing global leadership in various sectors. The plan acknowledges challenges and opportunities while positioning the country for a prosperous and sustainable future.

To create a vibrant society, Vision 2030 (2016) promotes sports as a means of enhancing social participation, improving quality of life through physical activity, fostering social cohesion, empowering youth, reducing crime, boosting the economy, and preserving cultural identity. The Saudi government is investing in sports infrastructure, training programs, and talent development to achieve these goals and create a healthy, united, and proud society.

Chapter 3: Sports within Vision 2030

Within the Vision 2030 (2016) initiative, Vision Realization Programs (VRPs) are strategic implementation plans that outline specific objectives and actions to achieve the goals of KSA's long-term vision. Each of the eleven VRPs focus on a specific sector or area of development and is led by a responsible entity or ministry. They provide a clear framework for coordinating efforts, allocating resources and monitoring progress towards the vision's objectives.

One such VRP is the Quality of Life Vision Realization Program (Quality of Life Program, 2017). It is a comprehensive program designed to enhance the quality of life for Saudi citizens by focusing on various aspects of well-being, including recreation, entertainment, culture, and health, all of which is touched upon through sports.

3.1: Quality of Life VRP

The Quality of Life Program (2017) has introduced integrated initiatives to enhance the sports landscape across KSA. These initiatives aim to increase sports popularity, improve stadium experiences, foster community engagement, establish sports federations and fan clubs and boost international participation. The program encourages active sports participation, supports elite athletes, and hosts international events to enhance the country's sporting reputation globally. It also aims to be inclusive and promote social cohesion by creating sports activities for expatriates.

The program seeks to attract local and foreign investment in the sports sector, stimulating growth and creating employment opportunities. It also emphasizes collaboration among stakeholders to improve efficiency and streamline operations. Overall, the program aims to create a vibrant sports culture that enhances the overall quality of life in the country (Quality of Life Program Implementation Plan, 2020).



Figure 11 – The Quality of Life VRP aims to increase Saudi participation in sports (Robert Wood, 2014)

The National Sports Strategy (2022) serves as a sports-specific guiding plan within the Quality of Life program, providing a comprehensive roadmap for the development and promotion of sports in KSA. It aligns with the program's objectives of fostering a healthy society and positioning the nation as a thriving sports hub.

3.2: The National Sports Strategy

The National Sports Strategy (2022) is a comprehensive plan aimed at fostering an effective sports sector in KSA, building an active society, and achieving international recognition. It focuses on three core sports pillars: mass participation in sports and physical activity, talent development pathway and elite performance. The strategy also emphasizes four sports delivery enablers and three sports ecosystem enablers, guided by principles of diversity and inclusion, merit-based sector, and integrity.

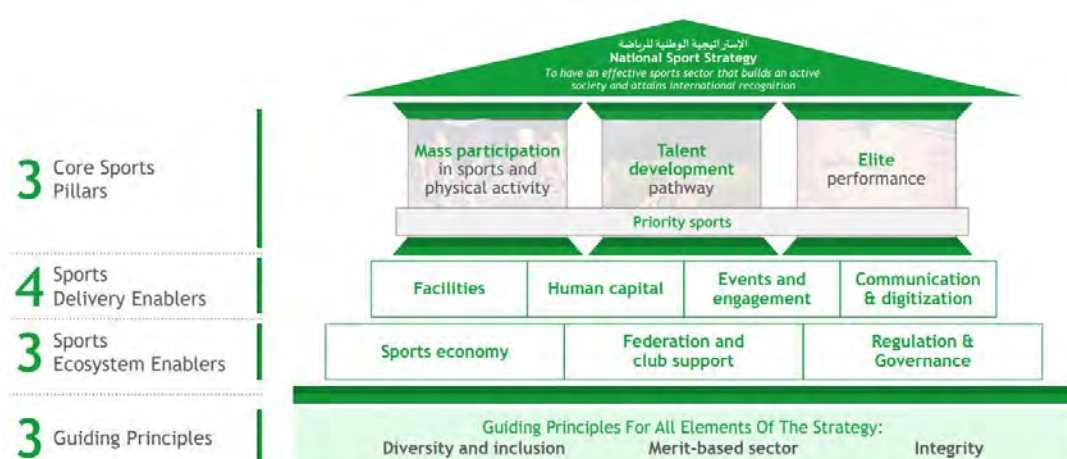


Figure 12 – National Sports Strategy components

Pillar initiatives:

In the Mass Participation pillar, four initiatives aim to enhance sports participation and physical well-being for all ages and backgrounds. These initiatives include improving physical education in schools and universities, promoting after-school sports programs, tailoring sports programs for specific age groups and providing tailored programs for high-risk populations (National Sports Strategy, 2022).

The Talent Development Pathway focuses on three initiatives aiming to identify and nurture talent. These initiatives involve talent identification programs in schools and communities, establishing national academies for youth training, and sponsoring developing athletes for national and international training programs (National Sports Strategy, 2022).

The Elite Performance pillar focuses on supporting elite athletes in both sporting and non-sporting aspects. The initiatives involve athlete-centric support, including programs for female athletes and athletes with disabilities as well as defining elite athlete status and appropriate pay and benefits schemes. The second initiative establishes a national academies program with a focus on youth, creating a network of elite performance centers to provide infrastructure and resources for talent development (National Sports Strategy, 2022).

The goal of these initiatives is to create a comprehensive sports ecosystem in KSA that fosters active participation, nurtures talent, and achieves excellence on the international stage. The strategy aims to promote sports and healthy lifestyles, provide inclusive opportunities, develop talent identification and development programs, establish national academies, and offer athlete-centric support. The vision is to enhance physical well-being, engage individuals of all ages and abilities and empower talented athletes to achieve success at national and international levels, ultimately positioning KSA as a leading force in the world of sports (National Sports Strategy, 2022).

Sports selection:

The strategy identifies priority sports for development based on strategic importance, participation rates, facilities, and international recognition. These sports are targeted for investment and support to achieve national development goals and contribute to health, well-being, social cohesion, and economic development. The strategy has chosen 23 sports for elite performance and 11 sports for mass participation (National Sports Strategy, 2022).



Figure 13 – National Sports Strategy priority sports

While the National Sports Strategy identifies priority sports for development, it also recognizes the importance of hosting international events to promote sports and attract investment. The strategy recommends hosting a mix of major and mega events across different sports to achieve this goal.

Events and Engagement:

Within the National Sports Strategy (2022), under the Events and Engagement delivery enablers, three tiers of events are described:

1. Major and mega events
2. National and international events
3. Local and regional events with mass participation

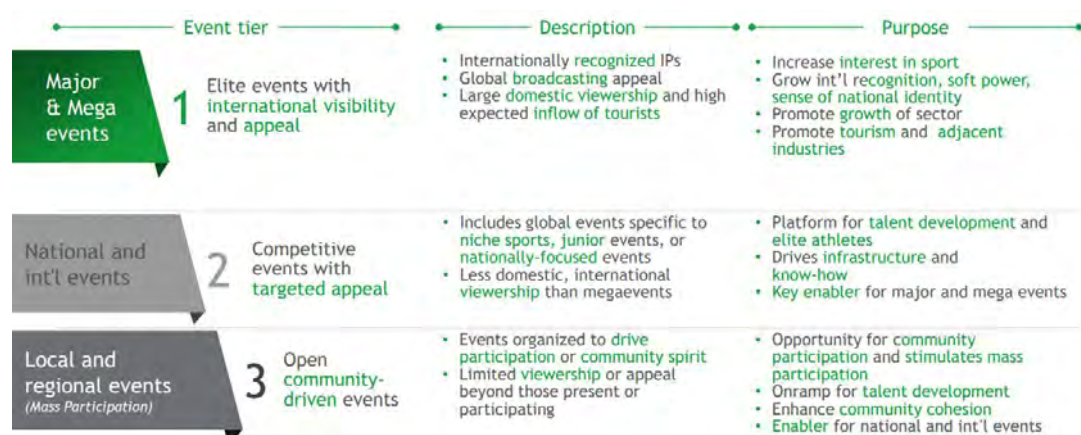


Figure 14 – National Sports Strategy event focus

The National Sports Strategy categorizes sports events into three tiers. Major and Mega events are the highest tier, characterized by international recognition, global broadcasting appeal, large viewership, and significant tourism impact. Examples hosted by KSA include the Dakar Rally, Formula 1, Formula E and the Asian Football Confederation champions' league (National Sports Strategy, 2022).

National and international events form the second tier, aiming to promote the growth of the sport sector, tourism, and adjacent industries. Examples include the Saudi Games, Saudi Tour, GCC Games and university championships (National Sports Strategy, 2022).

Local and regional events with mass participation constitute the third tier, aimed at community involvement, talent development and enabling larger events. Examples include community fun runs and local sports tournaments (National Sports Strategy, 2022).

The National Sports Strategy strives to establish a robust framework for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 events while prioritizing Major and Mega events. This approach involves the development of necessary infrastructure and expertise to facilitate future large-scale bids, such as the Asian Games in 2034. The strategy focuses on organizing the events landscape and ensuring progress towards the envisioned structure by coordinating a comprehensive master calendar. This calendar guarantees that events align with the National Sports Strategy and are feasible to execute (National Sports Strategy, 2022).



Figure 15 – KSA has hosted major sporting events, including a Formula 1 event in Jeddah (Samar, 2021)

Chapter 4: Saudi Games

The Saudi Games have emerged as a pivotal event within the framework of the National Sports Strategy of KSA, serving as a significant build-up towards the hosting of the Asian Games in 2034. Aligned with the objectives outlined in the strategy, the Saudi Games are an essential stepping stone in the country's pursuit of becoming a renowned destination for major international sporting events. By hosting these annual multi-sport competitions, KSA aims to develop its sporting infrastructure, nurture talented athletes, refine event management capabilities and create a thriving sports ecosystem - thus addressing all three pillars of the National Sports Strategy.

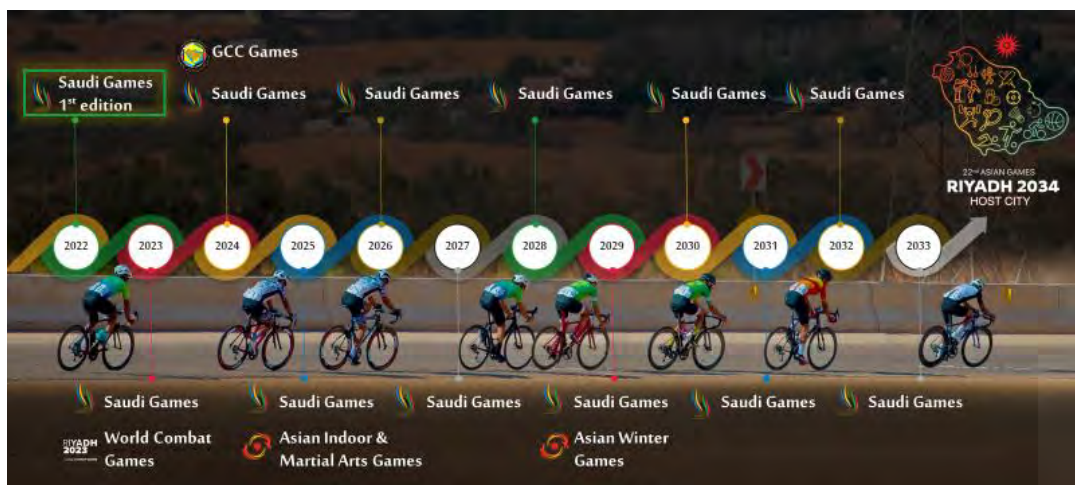


Figure 16 – The Saudi Games will be held annually in preparation for the Riyadh 2034 Asian Games

4.1: Saudi Games in Vision 2030

The Saudi Games play a vital role in KSA's Vision 2030, fostering economic diversification by developing the sports industry and attracting investments through sports tourism. Moreover, they actively promote social well-being by encouraging widespread sports participation, including women, children, and individuals with disabilities.

Beyond their local impact, the games elevate KSA's global standing, serving as a platform to showcase the country's progress in sports. Successfully organizing and executing these multi-sport competitions strengthen KSA's reputation as a capable host and enhance its international standing in the sports world (National Sports Strategy, 2022).

As a crucial component of the National Sports Strategy, the Saudi Games provide an invaluable platform to gain experience in organizing and managing multi-sport events. They also facilitate talent identification and development, attract

investments, and boost overall economic development (National Sports Strategy, 2022).

Emphasizing a sustainable legacy, the Saudi Games prioritize empowering individuals in the sports industry, promoting cultural understanding, and integrating sustainable practices. These efforts aim to create a positive and culturally enriched future for KSA (National Sports Strategy, 2022).

4.2: Saudi Games 2022

Scope, significance, and objectives:

The Saudi Games were put in place to inspire athletes and the youth demographic and develop the Kingdom's hosting capabilities. Its vision was to be the stage for Saudi athletes to stand out and reach their personal best while its mission was to inspire youth through sports whilst globally showcasing the Kingdom's ability to host major events.

The Saudi Games 2022 stands as of today the largest national multi-sport event in the history of KSA, captivating the nation with its scale and ambition (Bari, 2022). Spanning from October 27 to November 7, 2022, they boasted the participation of over 6,000 athletes, representing more than 200 clubs from across the Kingdom (D. Al Saud, personal communication, November 2022).

With four core pillars in mind: talent identification, community engagement, operational excellence, and sports economy, the Games were a testament and celebration to KSA's commitment to sports excellence and paved the way for the growth and development of diverse sporting culture in KSA (Baker, 2022).

Objectives under the talent identification pillar focused on increasing participation in sport competitions and expanding the pool of elite athletes in the Kingdom, ensuring a sustainable pipeline of talented individuals ready to excel on both national and international stages. Under the community engagement pillar, the objective was to increase opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to participate in multiple sports. By fostering widespread participation and instilling a sense of national pride, the Games sought to create a sports culture that resonated with individuals and communities at large. Operational excellence had the objective of providing world-class facilities, infrastructure, and organizational expertise to establish the Kingdom's reputation and attract international recognition. The Sports economy pillar had objectives encompassing increasing sports GDP, generating employment opportunities, fostering private sector participation, and attracting

investments in the sports ecosystem(D. Al Saud, personal communication, November 2022).

Through the pursuit of the objectives, the Saudi Games aspired to leave a legacy by nurturing athletes, inspiring participation, showcasing the Kingdom's capabilities, and contributing to the overall growth and prosperity of the sports sector.



Figure 17 – Saudi Games impact overview (Saudi Games Organizing Committee, 2022)

Sports selection:

The selection process for the Saudi Games 2022 carefully considered both supply and demand aspects of the Saudi sport sector. It focused on evaluating the capabilities of sport federations and venues (supply) and the interest and participation of the public in each sport (demand). By using a comprehensive assessment with predefined weights for each criterion, the games achieved a well-balanced and diverse lineup of 45 sports disciplines and 31 venue facilities, catering to athletes from various backgrounds and interests (D. Al Saud, personal communication, November 2022).



Figure 18 – Saudi Games sports selection

The event showcased both traditional sports like athletics and football, as well as emerging and niche disciplines like esports (Abbas et al., 2023) and padel (Czermark, 2022; Gulf News, 2022). The inclusion of Paralympic sports and esports highlighted the games' commitment to inclusivity and recognizing the changing landscape of sports.

Overall, the Saudi Games 2022 embraced a wide spectrum of sporting competitions, ranging from traditional sports with a long-standing legacy to emerging and niche disciplines. By providing a platform for athletes from various backgrounds and abilities to compete. The games resonated strongly with the Saudi population, demonstrating the value placed on athletes and fostering a sense of national pride (Arab News, 2022).

SG 2022 as a catalyst for long-lasting sport excellence, reputation, and social progress:

The success of the Saudi Games 2022 can be attributed to the collective support and collaboration from various stakeholders, from the SOPC to volunteers and athletes' families. The event's objective was to inspire the younger generation of Saudis to adopt an active lifestyle and explore potential careers in sports. The substantial prize money (around SAR 219MM) and access to elite training facilities provided participants with opportunities to pursue their dreams and turn aspirations into reality (D. Al Saud, personal communication, November 2022).

The Saudi Games 2022 had a significant impact on sport, reputation, and social progress. With 45 sports disciplines including para sports, 151 competitions and medal ceremonies, 6,000 participants (of which 28% were female), 241 para-athletes, 302 expatriate competitors, and 1,170 volunteers among 31 state-of-the-art venues, the event showcased athletic prowess and gender inclusivity (D. Al Saud, personal communication, November 2022).

Aligned with the Saudi Vision 2030, the Saudi Games 2022 marked a milestone in the country's sporting landscape. It served as a catalyst for the growth and development of the Saudi sport ecosystem, inspiring athletes, promoting physical activity, and paving the way for future major sporting events. However, there is room for improvement and growth to make the next editions even more successful (D. Al Saud, personal communication, November 2022).

Chapter 5: Literature Overview

The legacies left by Sports Mega Events (SMEs) have been the object of research, studies, and analyses in different fields of science, generating conflicting views on whether they are beneficial or not for the host country or city. Considering this, the science emphasizes its scope of research with the intention of understanding, investigating, analyzing, and/or developing proposals that can measure the legacies left behind by SMEs.

The purpose of this overview was to conduct a systematic review with mixed literature of qualitative convergence regarding the measurement of legacies from SMEs.

5.1: Databases SPORTDiscus and Google Scholar

The Barcelona Olympic Games: Looking Back 25 Years On (and 4): From Barcelona '92 to the Future of Sports Events:

1) Donato, F. S., Povill, A. C. I., Chappelet, J. L., Edmondson, I., & Lagares, E. T. I. (2017). The Barcelona Olympic Games: Looking Back 25 Years On (and 4): From Barcelona'92 to the Future of Sports Events. *Apunts. Educació Física i Esports*, (130), 107-126.

The purpose of the series is to analyze the impact of the Olympics on the city and the country one quarter of a century after the capital of Catalonia hosted one of the most important events ever. Based on the learning from this period from the perspectives of sports, economics and society, this study suggests and discusses some of the factors that may be crucial in the organization of future sporting events. Variables are analyzed such as the place and repetition rate where these events are held as well as future trends. There are other aspects which are directly associated with governance, such as the choice of candidate sites and the provenance of the resources to finance them. With the opinions of different authors, an effort has been made to point to the vision of the events in the forthcoming years.

Finally, the most important factor is the legacy. The organizers of a sporting event who were capable of thinking about the long-term impact, its sporting, economic and social legacy, could host a comprehensive event. When in the planning and organization phase it is thought of not only about the 15 days of the competition but beyond that, this attitude will most likely be synonymous with a sound conceptualization, which is a key element. It is broadly accepted that Barcelona achieved the objective of legacy, and even though 25 years later it can be seen that some aspects could have been improved, it is irrefutable that on the sports-social

levels alone, today's citizens have a network of sporting facilities for their use, and that the city has become a benchmark in hosting other sporting events over these years. Both intangibly (in terms of know-how and collective self-esteem) and tangibly (square meters of sports facilities, transport, airport, etc.), Barcelona has sufficient elements to be regarded as a true example of organization bearing the future in mind.

Strategic and integrated approach to event organizing:

2) Thomson, A., Cuskelly, G., Toohey, K., Kennelly, M., Burton, P., & Fredline, L. (2019). Sport event legacy: A systematic quantitative review of literature. *Sport management review*, 22(3), 295-321.

The study of sport event legacies has grown rapidly since 2000 across a number of disciplines related to planning and hosting large-scale sport events. However, to date, there have been limited attempts to systematically review and synthesis extant sport event legacy research, reflect on existing knowledge, and identify key gaps for future research. In this article, the authors reviewed the state of sport event legacy research through a systematic quantitative review of 305 original, peer-reviewed research articles published in English language journals between 2000 and 2016. Results demonstrate that a small group of academics concentrated in particular countries are driving the publication of studies on sport event legacy in predominately specialised sport and event journals. There is a clear research interest in legacy outcomes realized through hosting sport events in areas of public life, politics, and culture, as well as mass participation sport. The authors identify key areas for future research and make recommendations for empirical research designs to progress scholarship and better inform policy and practice pertaining to sport event legacy.

The most consistent finding across the sample of articles reviewed was the need for host cities to integrate long-term plans for legacy within broader urban and community development planning with the help of key stakeholders. The sampled research overwhelmingly asserted that more needs to be done by host cities to plan for and secure legacy outcomes. These findings are indicative of a broader a paradigm shift away from the understanding of legacy as something left behind towards legacy as something that needs to be planned and actioned in the lead up to, during and after an event (Clarke, Kearns, & Cleland, 2016; Rogerson, 2016). Our sample of articles also reflected a tendency to categorize legacies as positive, mixed, or negative, with much lesser coverage of exclusively negative legacies. While there is recognition that specific legacy outcomes may simultaneously impact different stakeholder groups in different ways (Preuss, 2007; Thomson et al., 2013), there continues to be a trend in the research of attempting to categorize legacy purely as

positive, mixed, or negative. Further, there was much less coverage of potential negative legacy outcomes.

3) Maussier, B. (2017). The New Ethical Dimension of Sports Events: a Reflection on the Evolution from the Ancient Greek Olympic Sports Festival to Postmodern Sports Events.(La nueva dimensión ética de los eventos deportivos: una reflexión sobre la evolución desde la antigua fiesta deportiva olímpica griega a los eventos deportivos postmodernos). Cultura, Ciencia y Deporte, 15-25

The purpose of this paper is to identify the new social functions of sports events in postindustrial society starting from a reflection on the intersections in the relationship among the ethical values of the ancient Greek Olympic sports festival and the postmodern model of sustainable event management. From a literature review on leisure, sports, and event studies, it emerges that sports events, conceived of as postmodern festivals, can help people who take part in them experience a new ethical dimension and celebrate the spirit of ancient Olympia and its values in an innovative way. In summary, from the review of the above-mentioned literature emerges a set of ethical potentials of ancient sports festivals within the possible implementation of their intrinsic values in the context of contemporary sports events through the specific actions of planning and management for sustainable and ethical development.

Challenges involved in modern sport events management:

4) Kornbeck, J. (2021). Who owns sport? edited by Andrew Adams and Leigh Robinson, London et al., Routledge, 2019, 140 pp.

This essay explores the complex economic, political, cultural and social claims over sport, from multi-disciplinary perspectives including philosophy, history, political science and management.

The book seeks to uncover some of the tensions and dilemmas wrapped up within aspects of owning sport and attempts to make sense of the place, role, meaning and function of sport when set against the broad notion of ownership. It considers the relationships between individuals, organizations, and institutions, and investigates the power of grassroots participants from the bottom up. In presenting contemporary analyses from many viewpoints, not simply the commercial, it asks the reader to think of sport differently.

Important reading for scholars and students with an interest in sport and society, sport management, policy, or development, as well as those studying political

science, economics, philosophy, and development studies, this is also a useful resource for practitioners, managers and those working strategically with sport.

5) Winand, M., Zintz, T., Bayle, E., & Robinson, L. (2010). Organizational performance of Olympic sport governing bodies: dealing with measurement and priorities. *Managing Leisure*, 15(4), 279-307.

It is widely recognized that the performance measurement of organizations should help them in their strategic decisions and in their capacity to evaluate their successes. This measurement is, however, lacking in the sport governing bodies from the French speaking Community of Belgium. This paper proposes a model to measure organizational performance by considering objectives distributed among five main dimensions: sport, customer, communication and image, finance, and organization, which are measured by quantitative performance indicators. The focus of the paper is on governing bodies of Olympic sport and the model measures their strategic objectives and operational goals. In addition, the priority that the Chairs of 13 Olympic sport governing bodies attach to each dimension and each objective is assessed. Finally, there is a discussion of the comparison of their priorities and their organizational performance, which leads to the identification of four strategic orientations.

6) Robinson, L., & Minikin, B. (2012). Understanding the competitive advantage of National Olympic Committees. *Managing leisure*, 17(2-3), 139-154.

The competitive advantage of an organization arises from the resources and capabilities that are in place within the organization. Competitive advantage leads to strategic success and a lack of it leads to a lack of success. Using the resource-based view of developing competitive advantage, this paper aims to investigate why many National Olympic Committees (NOCs) do not appear to be successful at the Olympic Games. It does this by investigating the resources and capabilities of the national federations (NFs) that are responsible for developing the athletes that are the main resource of the NOCs. The underlying premise of this research is that the competitive advantage of an NOC is reliant on the ability of their NFs to produce athletes who can be competitive on a world stage. The NFs within three Pacific countries were audited using the Readiness Assessment Tool developed to assess their resources, structures, and capabilities. The research shows that the NFs under investigation were not sufficiently developed to create competitive advantage due to poor resources and low levels of capability. Therefore, there is a need for these NFs to develop further as organizations through 'knowledge transfer', the leveraging of resources and capacity-building through alliances with other organizations or countries that are better placed to produce elite athletes.

7) Kellison, T., Sam, M. P., Hong, S., Swart, K., & Mondello, M. J. (2020). Global perspectives on democracy and public stadium finance. *Journal of global sport management*, 5(4), 321-348.

Arenas, ballparks, and stadiums built for professional sports teams or mega-events all around the world often come with large public costs. In democratic states, citizens are assumed to have a role in public policymaking, but previous research suggests the strength of this role can vary case-to-case. To examine the incidence of public stadium finance and public participation across the geopolitical landscape, a collective case study was employed and organized into regime type (i.e., full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, authoritarian regimes). The results of the study show clear contrasts in the financing mechanisms within and between regime types. Additionally, each case-study grouping contained examples of citizen-led public participation, though the efficacy of these democratic actions is questionable. This review complements the growing literature on public policy and stadium finance by assessing public engagement in current stadium-subsidy debates around the world.

Considerations around awarding of events to developing countries:

8) Suzanne Dowse & Thomas Fletcher (2018): Sport mega-events, the 'non-West' and the ethics of event hosting, *Sport in Society*

Events and sports events are perceived as having the potential to contribute to various benefits for the host country and its communities. The socio-political and economic environment of the host is an important consideration for both prospective hosts and event owners when allocating hosting rights. It is, therefore, unsurprising that concerns have been raised over the relatively recent relocation of events to developing countries which, by their nature, frequently lack the economic, political, and social stability of the traditional industrialized host. Developing nations are less affluent and arguably less prepared to deliver large scale sports events than developed nations. Therefore, this paper asks, 'are governing bodies, when equipped with this knowledge, ethically obliged to withhold hosting rights from developing countries?' The paper argues that denying sovereign States the right to make their own decisions would appear to compound the disadvantaged status of countries that mega-event hosting is perceived to address. The paper contends that event hosts—particularly those in the developing world—are potentially vulnerable to exploitation by the event owner.

9) Hinch, T. D., Higham, J. E., & Moyle, B. D. (2016). Sport tourism and sustainable destinations: foundations and pathways. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 20(3-4), 163-173.

Destinations serve as the spatial context and reference point for this special issue. They are, in essence, the place where sport tourism is produced and consumed (Higham, 2005). Whether sport tourism development takes the form of sport events, active participation, or sport heritage activities, it draws on local resources and forms part of the complex dynamic of community life (Preuss, 2015; Weed, 2008). Sport tourism therefore has implications for destination residents who may benefit from, or incur the costs of this development, with potential impacts ranging across the local–global spatial spectrum (Giampiccoli, Lee, & Nauright, 2015). As such, it is essential that the academic community critically question the sustainability of sport tourism destinations.

10) Mataruna-Dos-Santos, L. J., Milla, A. C., Abohassan, D. A. M. M., & Khan, M. S. (2022). Sustainable Sport Tourism for Better Future: The Emerging Case of the United Arab Emirates. In *International Perspectives on Sport for Sustainable Development* (pp. 341-355). Springer, Cham.

Sport has been a major player in uniting people and ensuring peace amongst nations. Nowadays, sports have another agenda item on their list: sustainability. The aim of this chapter was to provide an overview of how United Arab Emirates (UAE) can contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting sustainability in both event management and execution and provide an insight on the sustainable practices and the challenges of implementing such actions. The study used a systematic literature review as well as event reports to validate the importance of sustainable sport tourism in the country. UAE's Green Economy initiative is clearly derived from the "Green Lifestyle" and "Green City" aligning together with the Good Health and Well Being (SDG 3), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11) and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17) of the United Nations SDGs. The great efforts by the country leaders in establishing a long-term vision, Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan and UAE 2071, which aims to invest in the future generations by equipping them with the needed skills and knowledge to position UAE as the best country in the world by the next centennial is a testament to the nation's sustainability action plan.

11) Amara, M. (2014). Sport and political leaders in the Arab world. *Histoire Politique*, (2), 142-153.

12) Bromber, K., & Krawietz, B. (2013). The United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain as a modern sport hub. In *Sport Across Asia* (pp. 203-226). Routledge.

During the late 1950s several leading North African footballers abandoned their thriving careers and place on the French national team, choosing to cast their lot with the Algerian liberation movement and form a team representing the national movement. In July 2007, the Iraqi national football team won the Asian Cup, its spirited never-say-die attitude offering a fractured nation a sense of unity and a measure of hope for co-operation. In the recent Arab Spring uprisings, athletes and fans have been at the forefront of the calls for greater freedom, leading protests and community building, a continuation of the role that sport has played for many years as one of the few places where political resistance and organizing were voiced and honed. These are some of the events underscoring sport's special place and importance in the Arab world and which Algerian scholar Mafoud Amara notes in his *Sport, Politics and Society in the Arab World*, an important contribution to the small but growing field of scholarship about sport in the region.

Aiming at providing "a critical reflection on sport in the polity, society and history of the Arab world" (p. 1), the book has six chapters: development and sport; sport politics and policy in North Africa; Soccer in Algeria, post-colonialism and towards post conflict; the politics and business of sport and TV broadcasting; sports and business and politics in the Gulf states; and the Muslim perspective on sport. Each chapter contains a theoretical framework and ample examples. Together, the chapters demonstrate the role sports play in the formation of national identity, nation-state building, and international relations; and the way the commercialization of sport and the growth of sport media are changing Arab societies. The book's breadth is evident in the index with references to the Hamas movement, Halal, Franz Fanon, Rupert Murdoch, and Orientalism. Considering the long and rich history of sport in the Arab world and its importance to individual lives and societies, it is surprising that until recently Middle Eastern historians as well as sport scholars have mostly ignored the subject. While there were novels and films (both narrative and documentary) about sports in the region (stretching back to Togo Mizrahi's 1937 Egyptian film *Shalom al-riyadi* [*Shalom the Athlete*] about a Jewish soccer manager), academic work was sparse. Exceptions include the work of Houchang Chelabahi on Iranian football and politics, Abdul Karim Alaog and Thomas B. Stevenson on the important role football played in ending hostilities between the warring states of Yemen, and Israeli sociologists on Arab football in the Jewish state.

Gradually, more studies have appeared in publications such as *The International Review for the History of Sport*, *Sport in Society*, *Soccer and Society*, and *The International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, as well as general sociological

journals. Recent additions to the field include *Muslim Women and Sport*, edited by Tansin Benn, Haifaa Jawad, and Gertrud Pfister, and two works (in Arabic) by Egyptians writers: Yasser Thabit's *Hurub kurat al-qadam* (Soccer Wars), a study of Egyptian soccer history from its origins to the recent conflict between Algeria and Egypt on and off the field, and Mohamed G. Beshir's *Al-Altiras* (The Ultras), which is based on his time as an observer and participant with a group of Cairo Ultras. The growing realization that sport has been "an opportunity to explore new ways of thinking and knowing about Arab societies" (p. 193) and that it is a lens that can illuminate many aspects of society is also expressed in two websites, James Dorsey's *The Turbulent World of Middle Eastern Soccer* and Sertaç Sehlíkoglu's *Muslim Women in Sports*.

In addition to observations and insights, Amara also notes the importance of sports in his own life. The book's genesis was in his dissertation on modernization and professionalism of football in Algeria, which prompted him to ask questions about his own identity as an Algerian and an Arab. Studying sport offered a new way of understanding. Maintaining academic balance, Amara's own sensibilities — as a man concerned with the struggle for freedom and being on the side of the people vs. market forces, the liberation movements.

13) Ishac, W. (2020). Arab countries' strategies to bid and to host major sport events. In *The Routledge Handbook of Sport in Asia* (pp. 437-446). Routledge.

This chapter aims to explore what is behind the Arab countries investing in bidding to host international and mega sport events. First, it focuses on understanding the meaning of globalization and its relationship to Arab countries' interests in hosting these sport events. Second, it explains how hosting these sport events helps countries to achieve their development interests. These developments vary from improving infrastructure and social development to improving the country's image and gaining international recognition, while spreading their cultures and ideologies. Hosting these sport events is linked with improving the tourism sector. Despite the size of these events, which vary between the Arab countries due to their political stability and economic ability, it is shown that implementing these bidding and hosting strategies helps in modernizing and developing these countries.

14) Bayle, E., & Robinson, L. (2007). A framework for understanding the performance of national governing bodies of sport. *European sport management quarterly*, 7(3), 249-268.

Although much research exists on the performance of organizations little literature exists that allows understanding of the performance of national governing

bodies (NGBs) of sport. The research in this paper aims to facilitate this understanding and presents the results of a programme of research carried out with French NGBs. In the main phase of the research, utilizing an adaptation of Lawrence and Lorsch's theoretical framework, case study research was carried out with 11 French NGBs to understand their strategy and management practices in relation to their organizational performance. Analysis of these case studies, alongside previous research that has focused on the relationship between strategy/organizational structure and performance, leads to the proposal of a framework through which to explain NGB performance in the field of sport. This framework seeks to accommodate the relationship between strategy, management, and operational performance.

5.2: Summary of literature review insights

The literature review unveiled five crucial legacy creation factors:

- Major games Planning strategically and long-term to build a lasting legacy
 - Sound conceptualization throughout the strategic planning and organization phase of hosting major sports events
- Tracking organizational performance metrics across main dimensions
 - By measuring performance across areas like sport, image and organization, governing bodies can effectively track the impact of strategic decisions
- Designing an integrated approach involving key stakeholders
 - Developing a strategy with key stakeholders like local authorities will lead to a competitive advantage and a lasting global impact
- Empowering federations to create a competitive advantage
 - Empowered federations need to support the development of elite athletes using internal resources or strategic alliances to compete globally
- Boosting a national identity and global image through sport and media
 - Sport had a major role in Arab society in nation-state building, national identity and international image and is amplified by commercialization/ media

Overall, hosts are incorporating the long-term legacy aspect (sustainability and transformational impact on society) in the bidding and planning process, while the International governing bodies are increasingly recognizing the transformative potential of major sporting events for developing countries.



Chapter 6: Research Methodology

According to the literature review and a first empirical analysis of the collected data, we can confirm the conclusions drawn in ‘Measuring the legacies of sports mega events systematic review’ (Reis, R., Telles, S., & Teixeira, M. C. (2023):

“The data reveals that there are theoretical and practical studies about measuring the legacies of SMEs, especially in the fields of sports management and tourism. However, there is a lack of empirical studies that measure or demonstrate the positive and negative results stemming from SME legacies.”

Research hypothesis: Legacy of people, increased perception of sport as a tool for cultural development

Measurement methods: Methodological triangulation, use of multiple techniques to study a single problem (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998)

Research tools: The approach included semi-structured interviews (face to face) and quantitative closed-ended questionnaires (Google Form) as well as qualitative open-ended questionnaires (Delphi method).

The interviews were conducted in order to obtain first-hand information (i.e. communication, organization, participation) from clubs about the first edition of the Saudi Games. The questionnaires were sent out to Federations (impact on participation, manpower support and collaboration, and KPI alignment), medalists (communication, organization) and participating athletes (but as expected there was a lower response rate).

Both the interview guidelines and the questionnaires were composed with the aim to obtain more information intended to thereafter facilitate a deepdive with all the key stakeholders such as the national sport actors (NOC, Ministry of Sport, LOC, clubs, athletes, coaches, referees, federations) to obtain a rich perspective on the model and impact of the Saudi Games as well as to identify areas for improvement to ensure a lasting legacy.

The research was conducted across four stages:

- Stage 1 – Literature Review
 - Fourteen literary sources from online databases SPORTDiscus and Google Scholar
 - Topics include long-term legacy planning, federation resourcing to gain a competitive advantage, event hosting for developing countries, and more

- Saudi Games internal planning docs and reports
- Stage 2 – Research tools
 - Semi-structured face to face interviews
 - Close-ended questionnaire using Google forms
 - Open-ended questionnaire utilizing the Delphi method
- Stage 3 – Data collection and analysis
 - Quantitative analysis and empirical comments by a panel of experts representing the social actors involved in the research
 - Questionnaire responses from 210 participants representing the Saudi Games client groups, including athletes, officials, spectators, federations, Ministry of Sport, Olympic Training Center, LOC, and more
 - Post-event impact assessment by the Saudi Games Organizing Committee and experts
- Stage 4 – Conclusions
 - Drawing key insights from all three stages of research
 - Provide strategic recommendations to continue building on the legacy of the 2022 Saudi Games



Figure 20 – Research methodology

Chapter 7: Research Results

In this chapter, the results of the quantitative data obtained during the comprehensive survey will be analyzed. This survey outcome represents the collective insights of diverse stakeholders and segments within the Sports Sector.

- **Participant age**

Survey participants encompass a range of ages from 10 to 65, with the majority falling between 17 and 35, the prime athletic age bracket.

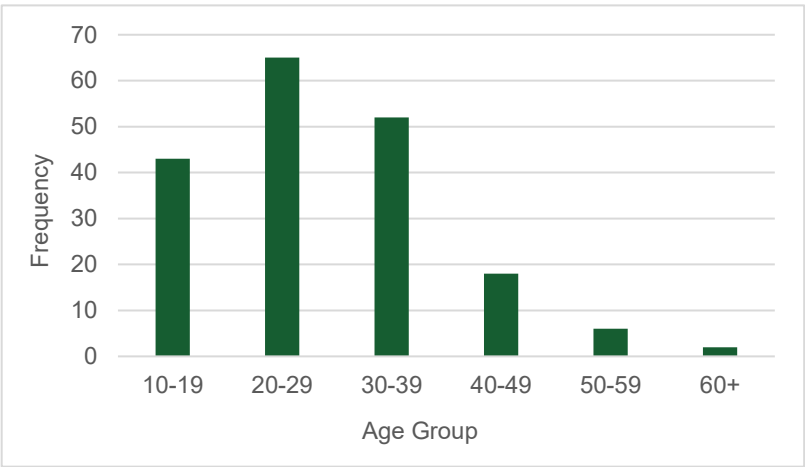


Figure 21 – Survey participants' age distribution

- **Participant gender**

Out of the 210 respondents, 141 (67%) were male and 69 (33%) female.

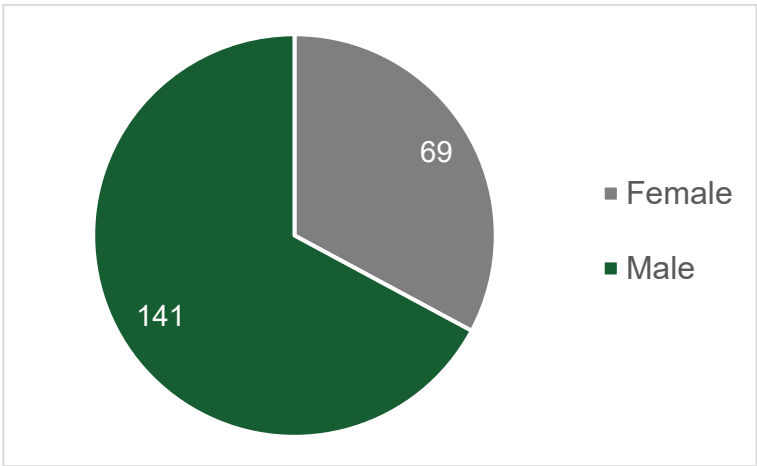


Figure 22 – Survey participants' gender distribution

▪ Participant impression of the SG

Survey participants were requested to rate the Saudi Games 2022 on a scale of 1 to 10, reflecting their overall impression of the event. Out of the 210 respondents, 188 (90%) answered a grade of 7 or more, and of those, 104 (50%) gave a 10 rating.

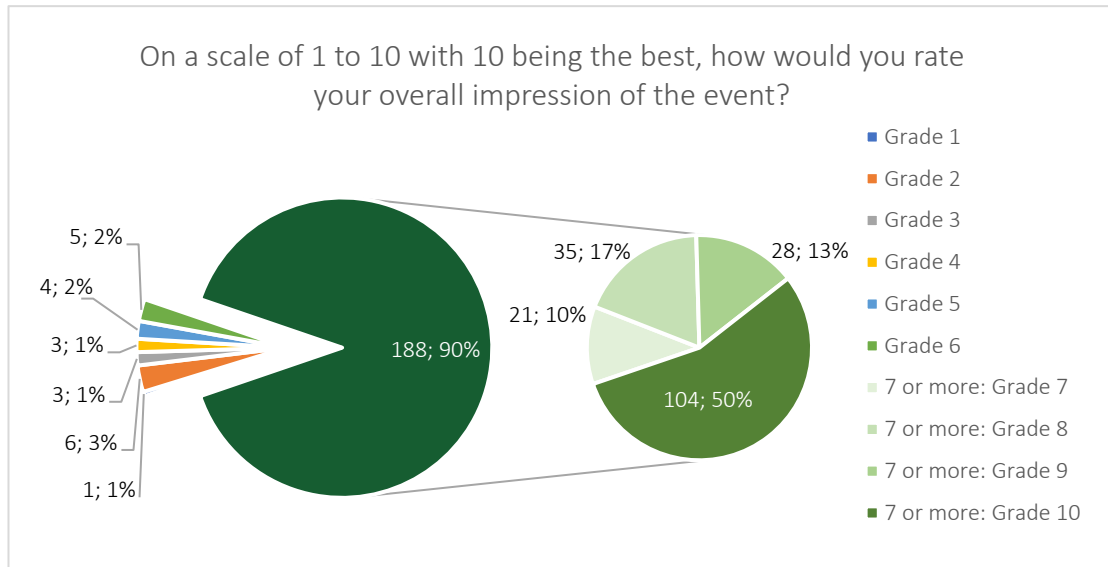


Figure 23 – Survey results – Saudi Games overall rating

▪ Participant perception of awareness around SG

Survey participants were requested to rate the Saudi Games 2022 on a scale of 1 to 10, reflecting their overall awareness of the event. Out of the 210 respondents, 160 (76%) answered a grade of 7 or more, and of those, 90 (43%) rated the event a 10.

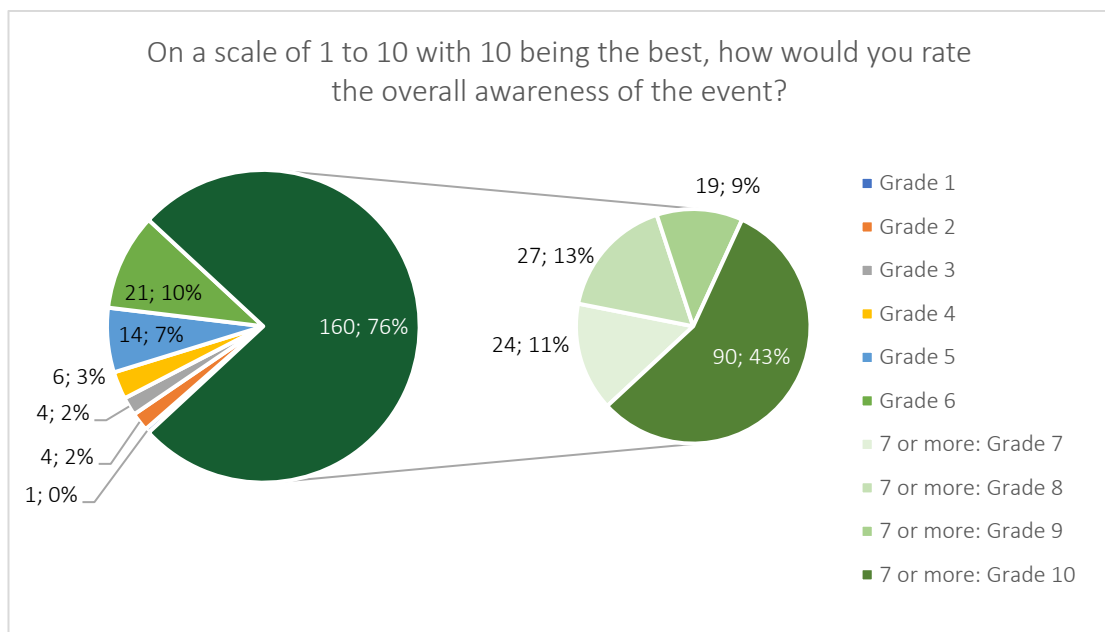


Figure 24 – Survey results – Saudi Games awareness rating

- Participant perception of SG key strengths

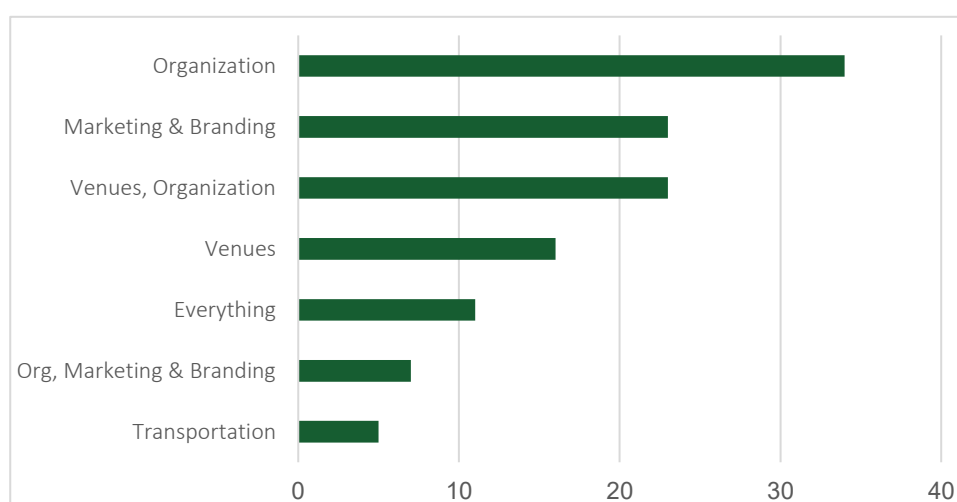


Figure 25 – Survey results – Saudi Games strength assessment

- Participant perception of SG key areas for development

Survey participants were also asked which were the points of development of the Saudi Games for the future:

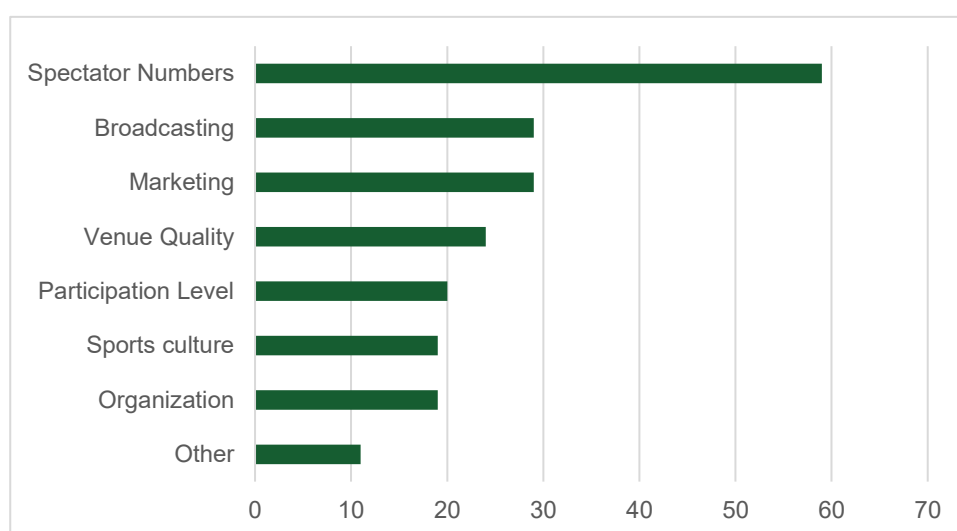


Figure 26 – Survey results – Saudi Games development areas assessment

- Participant perception of SG community impact

Finally, the participants were asked whether the Saudi Games had any impact in their community, local economy, or sports ecosystem:

Saudi Games impact	Your community	Local economy	Sports ecosystem
Yes	193 (92%)	164 (78%)	187 (89%)
No	17 (8%)	46 (22%)	23 (11%)

Figure 27 – Survey results – Saudi Games impact assessment

Chapter 8: Recommendations

The research, combined with an internal assessment of enhancement opportunities, identified improvement areas across the strategic objectives of the Saudi Games. Recommendations have been formulated to improve the impact of the games and in doing so contribute to a long-term legacy of societal transformation:

- **Talent Identification**

- Establishing a (link to a) dedicated high-performance program for SG talent to encourage youth participation in sports, recognize and develop talents, and create a sustainable pipeline of elite athletes for future editions.

- **Operational Excellence**

- Linking club involvement and performance in the Saudi Games to the Clubs Transformation Strategy.
- Integrating SG-specific KPIs within sport federation transformation strategies for event delivery and impact.
- Assigning major event deliveries to the same organizing office for effective and consistent execution. To accommodate the unique Saudi organizational culture and rapidly changing society, adopting a hybrid model with a stable steering committee and fixed-term departments comprising experts, volunteers, and specialists is deemed the most suitable solution.
- Prioritizing environmental sustainability through assessments, emissions reduction, and recycling initiatives.
- Continually grow the number of sports, venues as well as the participants (including foreign expats in KSA).

- **Community Engagement**

- Rotating the hosting of the Games across different regions to promote national unity and diversity.
- Creating Social Engagement Programs for the community to foster a sense of belonging and pride in sports.
- Engaging actively with schools, promoting sports events year-round with information and training sessions.
- Revamping the 'Fan Zone' concept to further engage spectators and fans.
- Encouraging participatory involvement of sports media beyond just sharing and commenting on events.

The implementation of these recommendations aims to maximize the value and impact of future SG editions (D. Al Saud, personal communication, November 2022).

Chapter 9: Conclusion

In recent years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has undergone significant transformation efforts in the sports field, driven by its Vision 2030 initiative - which in turn guided the National Sport Strategy which stressed the importance of large scale multi-sport events.

The nation has shown increased focus on various sports and the sports industry in general. Key areas of attention include the reform of national clubs and federations, privatization, sustainability plans, diversification of players, and the promotion of a wider variety of sports at a national level. Notably, the formation of over 20 new federations and committees in 2021 has brought the total number of sports federations under the Saudi Olympic & Paralympic Committee (SOPC) to 97, reflecting a dedicated commitment to the development of sports in the country. The introduction of the Saudi Games as a permanent national test event is another significant milestone in the transformation journey.

The Saudi Games is the largest national sporting event held annually in the Kingdom. It is a multi-game combined sports tournament, with the presence of more than 6,000 participating athletes. The SG contribute to the realization of a number of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 goals including the improvement in the quality of life through sports excellence, inspiring the Saudi youth through sports, and the creation of an emerging sports generation capable of representing the Kingdom in international sports forums. The later it does so by revealing and developing their talents and creating spaces and opportunities to practice all sports activities. Finally, it also promoted the overall sports movement in the Kingdom.

Building on the success of its inaugural edition, this year's Saudi Games are scheduled to take place from November 26th to December 10th, 2023. The Games will showcase an even wider range of 49 sports including 12 youth-specific events and 4 demonstration sports (in addition to inclusion of 6 para sports), featuring a total of 230 events which is significant more than the 151 events held during the inaugural Games.

The Saudi Games 2022 serves as a successful launching pad for major multi-sport events in KSA, underlining the potential for growth in the country's sport ecosystem. To further elevate future editions and strengthen the legacy, this thesis research and internal analysis have informed numerous strategic recommendations across the key objectives.

Personally, I strongly believe in the transformative power of the Saudi Games and stress two key recommendations. Firstly, establishing a dedicated high-performance program for Saudi Games talent will encourage youth participation in sports, recognize and develop young talents, and create a sustainable pipeline of elite athletes for future editions. Secondly, linking the clubs' involvement and performance in the Games to the Clubs Transformation Strategy, which will boost participation, improve overall competitiveness, and safeguard athletes' welfare by incentivizing clubs and requiring them to share prize money with athletes.

With strategic recommendations in place, the Saudi Games can further elevate the Kingdom's sporting landscape and leave a legacy on Saudi society.

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Chapter 11: Annex

Annex 1

A short history of KSA

Post-World War II Era (1945-1964):

The Post-WWII Era in KSA marked a significant transformation from a tribal society to a modern state, largely driven by the discovery of oil in 1938 and foreign investment. Oil revenues financed the development of infrastructure, such as roads, schools, and hospitals, and allowed the government to acquire advanced military equipment for border security. The oil discovery also attracted many foreign workers, influencing Saudi society by introducing new ideas and customs. (The History of Saudi Arabia, 2012)



Figure 28 – King Abdulaziz Bin Saud with US president Franklin D. Roosevelt aboard USS Quincy in 1945 (USA-C-545, 1945)

Football was introduced to KSA by British soldiers in the early 20th century. In 1956, Prince Abdullah bin Faisal Al Saud founded the Saudi Arabian Football Federation (SAFF), with the goal of promoting and developing football in the Kingdom. (SAFF history, 1957). By 1958, 12 regional football clubs had been founded – nowadays, SAFF has over 150 member clubs. (Saudi Arabian football history, 1957). It is the current governing body of football in KSA and is responsible for organizing the Saudi Professional League, the King Cup, and the Saudi Super Cup. It is also responsible for selecting and managing the KSA national football team.

In the political sphere, King Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud passed away in 1953 and was succeeded by his son, Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. A financial crisis in the early 1960s caused King Saud to abdicate in favour of his brother, Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in 1964. (Saudi Arabia History, 2013)

Economic and Social reform (1964-1975):

Under King Faisal's rule, KSA experienced economic stabilization and significant social reforms, including advancements in women's rights. The country underwent a transformation into a modern state, increasing its global presence. King Faisal implemented economic reforms, nationalizing the oil industry to gain more control over production and revenue while also diversifying the economy. (The History of Saudi Arabia, 2012)

In 1964, King Faisal bin Abdulaziz issued a royal decree establishing the Saudi Arabian National Olympic Committee. (History of the Saudi National Olympic Committee, 1964). It is the only governing body of Olympic sport in KSA and is responsible for representing the country at the Olympic Games and other international sporting events. After the creation of the Saudi Paralympic Committee in 1991, it has been merged into the Saudi Olympic Committee in 2021 to form the Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee (SOPC). There are currently over 97 federations, committees, and associations associated to the SOPC.

In March 1975, King Faisal was assassinated, and his brother, King Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, became his successor. (The Kingdom: Arabia and the House of Saud, 1981)

Modernization and Global Engagement (1975-2005):

During King Khalid's reign, KSA experienced significant economic growth fueled by rising oil prices in the 1980s. The government invested in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and industrial diversification. The country also strengthened ties with Western nations, particularly the United States, and embraced foreign workers to support economic development.

HRH Prince Faisal Bin Fahad implemented a series of five-year development plans between 1974 and 1999, which resulted in the establishment of large sports infrastructure projects across KSA (History of the Saudi National Olympic Committee, 1974). These projects included 150 sports clubs, 13 sports mega-complexes, 21 youth hostels, a leaders development institute, a sports medicine hospital, and many public

sports facilities. The number of sports federations also increased from 5 to more than 25, and the number of youths practicing sports has increased significantly.

King Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud became the ruler in 1982 and continued the modernization efforts. He was succeeded by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in 2005 (Saudi Arabia History, 2013).

Annex 2

- ☐ 1) Under which of the following categories do you fall into during your involvement in the 2022 Saudi Games?
- ☐ 2) Please write your age
- ☐ 3) Please choose your gender
- ☐ 4) From which city did you come from to participate in the 2022 Saudi Games?
- ☐ 5) What type of sports were you involved in?
- ☐ 6) On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the best, how would you rate your overall impression of the event?
- ☐ 7) On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the best, how would you rate the overall awareness of the event?
- ☐ 8) Is there a specific memory that you would like to share?
- ☐ 9) What do you consider are strong points in the Saudi Games?
- ☐ 10) In your opinion what is the strongest element of the 2022 Saudi Games?
- ☐ 11) In your opinion what is the weakest element of the 2022 Saudi Games?
- ☐ 12) Do you believe the Saudi Games impacted your community?
- ☐ 13) Do you believe the Saudi Games impacted the local economy?
- ☐ 14) Do you believe the Saudi Games impacted the sports ecosystem?
- ☐ 15) Do you believe the Saudi Games has influence on sports ecosystem?
- ☐ 16) Saudi Games help in motivate you to improve your performance?
- ☐ 17) Saudi Games increase awareness to your sports?
- ☐ 18) Saudi Games motivate your friends and family to watch or practice?
- ☐ 19) Saudi Games help improve relationship with your Federation?
- ☐ 20) Saudi Games help improve relationship with your club?
- ☐ 21) What would you suggest to be a focus for the next editions?