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Morocco: Country Image Management and Nation Branding

For many people, Morocco is famous for Rick's Café in the classic movie "Casablanca." Less well-known is the fact that the streaming series "Game of Thrones" and Daniel Craig's James Bond movie "Spectre" were also both filmed in Morocco.¹ Adding to these Hollywood images of Morocco, the country became known worldwide in 2022 as the home of the Atlas Lions, the national soccer team that fought their way through as underdogs to the semi-finals of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar. The Moroccan team was hailed by the global press as the first African nation and the first Arab country to advance so far in international football. Then, in 2023 the Moroccan women's football team, the Atlas Lionesses, drew the spotlight when they made it through to Round 16 as newcomers. These two successes in the world of international sports created unique opportunities for Morocco to promote a new country image on the world stage that went far beyond the world of movies. Also in 2023, a richly illustrated and fast-paced multimedia advertisement featured Morocco under the slogan "Kingdom of Light."² This was quickly followed by a second image campaign which added the slogan "Morocco, Land of Football," stating "We Dream Big" and "We Vibe with the Whole World."³

This case presents information about Morocco as a rapidly developing emerging economy which is achieving notable success in a range of global business sectors. The case should be read through the lens of a business consultant, government agent, or other decision-maker tasked with formulating a country image or nation branding campaign for the whole country of Morocco or one of its economic sectors. Discussion of the case questions lays the groundwork for development of an integrative campaign promoting a carefully tailored message to clearly-defined national or international target audiences, publics, stakeholders, or potential business partners.

First, the case presents Morocco, highlighting country characteristics and a wide range of opportunities for building the country's image. Then, nation branding and perception management concepts are discussed, along with country stereotyping and country brand personality, with a particular focus on Morocco. Next, the political history notion of a cultural turn is introduced to explain how Morocco chose to adopt a new image and role on the world stage, expressed through its New Development Model of 2021. Then, growth industries and business sectors are detailed, followed by a final discussion of potential branding and image-building opportunities.

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