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SUMMARY

THE ROLE OF SPORTS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

Working on the split identity issue inherent to Colombian Nation Branding

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Although there are several fields of study in the context of foreign affairs, nation branding as a developing concept and commercial nationalism practice is becoming more and more relevant as a manifestation of public diplomacy and soft power, because the improvement of a country's image intends to upgrade reputation through intangible assets, branding is also a resource of influence and communication between nations, and cosmetizing national identity is, as well, a way of generating economic benefits.

After many belligerent and conflictive ways of interacting, nations have found better means of solving problems. The end of the Second World War reconfigured, in different manners, relations among countries.

"The discipline of International Relations is one of the youngest of political and social sciences…Speaking about the international, it implies to analyze global phenomena that have been carried out through the impacts of modern revolutions, where the conformation of an international system has been characterized by the struggle between different states due to the imposed controls at times that the system was dedicated to extensive and intensive exploitation of natural and human resources in other territories."[1]

It does not seem that the field of International Relations is a field of modernity, there were also intergovernmental relations in the past, but there has been always a tendency of placing the birth of the international modern system after the Peace of Westphalia.[2] San Francisco State University defines International Relations as a social science which

"Is concerned with relations across the boundaries of nation-states. It addresses international political economy, global governance, intercultural relations, national and

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[1] María Cecilia Costero Garbarino, „El estudio de las relaciones internacionales y sus temáticas actuales", *Revista de El Colegio de San Luis*, nr. 3, 13 August 2014, pp. 153–154.

[2] David J Sarquís, William Faulkner, „LAS RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES EN LA HISTORIA: ¿DESDE CUÁNDO EXISTE EL FENÓMENO INTERNACIONAL?", 2012, p. 23.

ethnic identities, foreign policy analysis, development studies, environment, international security, diplomacy, terrorism, media, social movements and more."[3]

As a means of diplomacy and as a manifestation (perhaps not authentic) of national and ethnic identities, nation branding is also a theoretical concern for international relations scholars.

Nations are also eager to project themselves as aesthetic entities. The image starts to become relevant and the perception of its peers has become increasingly a matter of national interest. Nation branding is not only considered a communication instrument. Some scholars discussed the possibilities of the nation in making real modifications and changes to diverse countries' structures (such as political, infrastructural, economic, and so on) and make known these improvements. The issue that emphasizes the exchange of communication is commonly referred to as a matter of public diplomacy, which is a key issue in nation branding.[4] Through a variety of activities and projects – such as cultural fairs, student exchanges, and broadcasting -, public diplomacy makes it possible to share the policy changes with foreign publics."[5] On the other hand, influence, persuasion, and exhortation as a branding intention are related to soft power. "Instead of seeking results through short term invasions (with unsatisfactory cost-benefit results), nations may learn to seek influence through economic growth, long term emulation, and soft power influences."[6] As an instrument of communication and, as well, of seduction and persuasiveness in the context of international relations, nation branding is a tool/expression of public diplomacy and soft power.

Branding nations is also a story of the commercialization of intangible assets. Values are presented as national identity features, positive economic and political indicators that seek to increase perceptions in order to obtain financial benefits. "The establishment of a country brand and all the efforts made have to make changes in the way of doing international businesses between countries and affect the reality of nations that participate in this

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[3] „What is IR? | Department of International Relations", https://internationalrelations.sfsu.edu/what-ir, date of accession 23 July 2020.
[4] Senem Cevik, Efe Sevin, „A quest for soft power: Turkey and the Syrian refugee crisis", *Journal of Communication Management*, vol. 21, nr. 4, 6 November 2017, p. 412.
[5] *Ibidem*.
[6] Robert O. Keohane, „The Failure of Static and the Need for Dynamic Approaches to International Relations", în Christian Reus-Smit, Duncan Snidal (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of international relations*, Oxford handbooks of political science, Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York, 2008, p. 721.

exchange…"[7] This sums up one of the main goals of branding: the achievement of economic resources in a different way and not necessarily through trade agreements and other more common instruments. Nations need to evolve their business strategies. Attracting foreign investors, students, tourists, and buyers of local products is more feasible thanks to branding. These approaches entail competition and therefore "nation branding strategy is a consequence of a series of differentiation activities…"[8] The generation of an attractive identity is, as well, an era of the commercialization of national identities. A phenomenon of late capitalism, neoliberalism, a continuation of public diplomacy, and a soft power maneuver.[9] Nevertheless, something that seems not that harmful to countries, it has been discussed by some scholars as an unhealthy practice.

The critics of nation branding do not see how an unsubstantial version of identity can be helpful for countries. These are not reliable or credible versions of identity, but cosmetized identities that attempt to represent countries positively. However, most of them are far from reality and do not reflect countries' genuineness. National identity is very hard to precise and even harder to compress in order to be sold. Nation branding is an intention of trading national values (or at least what is done based on some national values) for the sake of the economy, and public diplomacy and soft power are still better strategies than unfair trade agreements. It is questioned that cooperation is out of the equation and competition is still the primary reason. And although these were the objectives of first studies on the field, it seems that there are other alternatives to make these international relations practice an honest tool of communication and influence.

The Split-identity issue

Even though the initial intentions and logics of nation branding are based on economic purposes, critic scholars have identified the perniciousness of using national identity – or artificially modified national identities – as a profit maker; because this causes an incongruence between actual national identity and branded identity, something that was

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[7] Pedro Barrientos Felipa, „El desarrollo de la marca país: base para posicionarse a través de las exportaciones no tradicionales", *Revista Finanzas y política económica*, vol. 6, nr. 1, 2014, p. 121.
[8] *Ibidem*, p. 138.
[9] Bianca-Florentina Cheregi, „BRANDING ROMANIA AS A "TECH COUNTRY". NATION BRANDING IN TIMES OF DIGITAL DISRUPTION", p. 298.

termed 'split-identity issue'. This inconsistency is intrinsic to the nation branding exercise. Scholars recommend against this practice and encourage actions that promote cooperation and not competition. Nevertheless, this research aims to argue that branding could be redirected and made with real identities through sports narratives and life-stories of famous athletes, which would breach the gap between national identity and nation branding.

The idea of conquering international markets is still a current subject of branding campaigns. Australia, being a country which many people would suppose that does not need any branding at all, has invested in the constitution of a good-looking image. "The nation brand project was created to unify Australia's various trading brands and imagery in international markets in a bid to 'inspire the world to buy into Australia's people, place, and product.' "[10] The fact that a country like Australia allocates funds for its image says a lot of the relevance attributed to communication and influence trough nation branding as an instrument of relationship between countries. Economic goals are going to be always priorities of countries, it does not matter if this happens at the expense of national identity. Filipinos used to be considered good drinkers, singers, and dancers. The festive spirit seems not to make a good impression for branding experts.

"Instead of hearing people say, 'You are Filipino, and you drink beer, sing and dance,' I want to hear them say that Filipinos are innovative, pacesetters, passionate, and technology-equipped. I want to share how good corporate governance has played a role in Brand Philippines."[11]

These words were spoken by Don Paulino, a high-level executive, Manager Director of Shell Philippines Exploration B.V., and other relevant leadership positions. It is indeed something that a company man like him would point out.

Marketing strategies advocate for thinking outside of the box. The idea of being different is always a premise in order to obtain better financial gains. "Be different. This is so important. If you are going to be like all your competitors, then there is nothing

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[10] Vivienne Kelly, „Australia's new international branding revealed", *Mumbrella*, https://mumbrella.com.au/australias-new-international-branding-revealed-632940, date of accession 24 July 2020.

[11] Eduardo HIlario, „Corporate governance as a catalyst for nation-branding", *Manila Bulletin*, https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/09/corporate-governance-as-a-catalyst-for-nation-branding/, date of accession 25 July 2020.

differentiating you from them. Showcase your personality on your site."[12] As a marketing-based logic, nation branding aims to implement strategies of differentiation, because a distinctive and more attractive national identity implies more clients and more investment for the country. To trade national values as products is one of the main issues that critic scholars have against branding. Like any other marketing approach, the important thing is the client's opinion. "If you are not sure what types of marketing or promotions your customers will respond to best, ask them."[13] Something so unique to a country has to be tailored to consumers' preferences, which is one of the reasons why nation branding is modified and cosmetized. It has to be charming and captivating. The major disadvantage is the incongruence created due to this procedure of prettifying identities. This is considered damaging and harmful by critical branding scholars and, therefore, according to them, the exercise in itself does more harm than good.

Perhaps thinking out of the box could also provide an answer to the lack of coherence between identities. The common approach is motivated by marketing dynamics, but what if different thinking is just trying to be honest and authentic? 'Split-identity issue' is an effect generated by the perspective of commercially attractive nation branding. The promotion of a nation's image does not have to be, necessarily, like promoting a deodorant. Some logics might work, but a country entails so many varied aspects that must be addressed and not be overlooked. However, several experts affirm that

"The perception of nations by audiences, or a nation's brand, are of importance to countries as they have the potential to create social, political, and –especially important in the case of commercial diplomacy – economic impacts. Furthermore, it is possible to manipulate these associations to establish a more favourable brand image by communicative processes…"[14]

This oversimplification of identity or just simply, this commercial version of identity is an inherent feature of branding itself and it can be modified, unless the way in which is

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[12] Ana Gotter, „35 Creative Marketing Strategies You Can Use to Think Outside-the-Box", *Disruptive Advertising*, https://www.disruptiveadvertising.com/marketing/creative-marketing-strategies/, date of accession 27 July 2020.

[13] Dan Scalco, „6 Ways to Think Outside the Box When Marketing Your Small Business", *Entrepreneur*, https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/284269, date of accession 27 July 2020.

[14] Efe Sevin, Keith Dinnie, „Digital channels and technologies for commercial diplomacy: conceptualisation and future research propositions", *International Journal of Diplomacy and Economy*, vol. 2, nr. 4, 2015, p. 269.

executed undergoes a transformation. This investigation explores different alternatives and opens the possibility of redesigning branding using sports narratives and life stories of national athletes.

It is certain that a practice that encourages competition instead of mutual collaboration will be questioned and contested by the academic world. Nation branding campaigns tend to turn antagonisms into common spaces and, even, necessary spaces in order to make progress. It seems there is no place for an inclusive and honest branding exercise because this would not bring money. Instead of getting rid of branding, making changes, and modifying the perspective, not only deals with the split-identity issue but also transforms the practice into real expressions of national identity. Sports narratives and life stories are the methodological proposal for branding without manipulations or cosmetizations. Identity becomes a social construction manifested as such by real characters and authentic discourses.

Colombian nation branding

Although, as mentioned, Nation Branding presents a problem that separates identity into two parts and Colombian Nation branding is a clear example of this, nevertheless a discussion on conventional branding practices, in the case of Colombia, provides an ideal theoretical scenario of analysis to find an alternative branding with more congruence, because the official national branding of Colombia is a cosmetized version of national identity, the huge amount of diversity of this nation in every respect makes it suitable to scrutinize and come up with a 'theoretical troubleshooting' or a more inclusive version of branding applicable to other cases, and the significant number of recent sports success on behalf the nation allows to have a broad spectrum of data.

Nation Branding is implemented by several countries in the world. Nonetheless, it seemed to be the answer to all developing countries' problems. If there was going to be nations that really needed something like that, they would be cases in which bad reputations, images, and perceptions were part of everyday life. It might be more indispensable a nation branding campaign for Kazakhstan than for Canada. Campaigns like these are perfect for thriving economies like Qatar: a territory that is trying to redefine its image with a lot of

money. The generous oil and gas reserves have allowed Qatar officials to invest 199,700 million dollars by the end of the first quarter of 2009.[15]

"The branding strategy adopted by Qatar is not only based on international awareness, but it also involves economic objectives as well. The principle tools that guide the branding and the physical development of Qatar are based on: the Al Jazeera Broadcasting Network, economic growth, tourism strategies, investing in higher education, the expansion of Qatar Airways and the redevelopment of Doha International Airport and the establishment of the capital Doha as an international event destination."[16]

The showcase of a friendly modified identity was a perfect way of persuasion and the projection of a country with several socio-political issues, but with a prospering economy.

Colombians brag about their political system. Being the oldest Latin-American democracy is something that is highlighted, not only by politicians but also by nation branding officials. José Miguel Pey was elected by popular suffrage as the Major of Santafé on July 20th, 1810. "According to some chroniclers, this election was the first democratic act that took place in the new America liberated from the Spanish Empire."[17] There are many other arguments such as electoral tradition, institutional stability, and so on. However, the Democracy Index gave the nation a score of 6.96, which qualifies it as a "flawed democracy".[18] It is also the country number 51 in a list of 167 countries, on which North Korea ranks last and Norway is the leader of all democracies. "Among the Latin-American countries, Colombia ranked tenth. Only three countries were listed as authoritarian: Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba."[19] In addition to these issues of democracy, Colombia has gone through several turbulent situations like drug trafficking, guerrilla conflict, and economic inequality. Implementing nation branding was always an option for this tropical

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[15] „Las inversiones extranjeras de Qatar aumentan un 6,6% en el primer trimestre de 2019", *Monitor De Oriente*, https://www.monitordeoriente.com/20190708-las-inversiones-extranjeras-de-qatar-aumentan-un-66-en-el-primer-trimestre-de-2019/, date of accession 28 July 2020.

[16] Hanan Hazime, „From city branding to e-brands in developing countries: An approach to Qatar and Abu Dhabi", *Afr. J. Bus. Manage.*, p. 4739.

[17] „La Democracia Más Antigüa de Latinoamérica", *Marca País Colombia*, https://www.colombia.co/pais-colombia/historia/por-que-se-dice-que-colombia-tiene-la-democracia-mas-antigua-de-america-latina/, date of accession 28 July 2020.

[18] „EIU Democracy Index 2019 - World Democracy Report", https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index, date of accession 28 July 2020.

[19] Johan Chiquiza, „Así le fue a Colombia en el Índice de Democracia emitido por The Economist", https://www.larepublica.co/globoeconomia/asi-le-fue-a-colombia-en-el-indice-de-democracia-emitido-por-the-economist-2813168, date of accession 28 July 2020.

country and for obvious (image related) reasons bad things were out of the question as identifiers of Colombianness. Nation Branding in the coffee country tells the story of success, new beginnings, and problems overcome.

National identity is one of the main 'inspirations' of consultants in the case of Colombia. Positive features such as happiness, dancing, music, sports achievements, and landscape diversity are the main characters of branding narratives. There are no stories whatsoever about conflict, poverty, difficult access to education nor drug dealing, it is not because these events do not longer happen, because they do. Many of them occur to a lesser degree, but they are still part of the historical heritage. Identity is not about the beautiful and perfect: it is also about the ugly and flawed like Colombian democracy, according to The Economist. This work makes an argument for a decommoditized nation branding, at least, from its conception. If turns out to be an economic success (theoretically, honest branding represents a financial loss, not profit), it is not the interest of this research. A nation branding exercise based on reality would be the promotion of countries, but with its flaws and strengths. Colombia is, indeed, a suitable case as a country with the apparent urgency of refreshing its image and reputation, but it is also an extremely diverse country, which makes it harder to simplify its identity and is more susceptible to present a more evident split-identity issue.

It appears to be that not having a branding campaign, especially in developing countries, is a capital mistake.

"The lack of country brands, and strong country brands, in Africa was recognized. A contributor to this was identified by one interview as being 'a continent brand defect', where the entire continent is considered as a single brand. The need for African countries to escape that image and get a separate perception was recognized… A country's good image would also help in promoting opportunities in the country tirelessly."[20]

In order to be part of the universal trend of giving countries a 'cool' appearance, Colombia invested a lot of money in setting up an image of difficulties overcome, peace, and tourism. It is not necessarily false, but there are a lot of things happening and they cannot be hidden and that is what branding attempts to do. The different variables and possibilities of

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[20] Evalyne Wanjiru, „Branding African countries: A prospect for the future", *Place Branding*, vol. 2, nr. 1, January 2006, p. 86.

this very diverse nation (in every sense) create a space of analysis that allows building a branding model based on real stories and sports narratives. Discourses that portray the rights, but also the wrongs.

The social constructions and productions of meaning behind the processes of national identity are extremely complex and hard to define and typify. This is one of the main reasons why branding (as a commercial oversimplification of national identity) has been qualified as an unhealthy exercise by several theorists. Not just because it promotes competition (which rules it out as a collaboration instrument between nations), but also the way in which is carried out causes too many inconsistencies. One of the main reasons is the significant difference between branded national identity and national identity. How can be a Colombian nation branding exercise designed without splitting national identity?; how can be made a branding different from what is expected that does not set aside essential elements and does not deny negativity (probably not attractive such drug dealing, violence, and corruption); but also a nation branding that projects identity inwards and outwards with honesty and in a closer way to reality?

Redefinition of nation branding through sports narratives

Although traditional branding practices pose a challenge to those that attempt to provide a conceptual alternative, nevertheless sports narratives provide a scenario that includes identity constructions and identity promotion, real stories of Colombian distinguished and famous athletes reflect (in many ways) the conditions, difficulties, and opportunities they faced growing up, where alternatives were not too many (violence, a bicycle or a ball). The situations surpassed, make them excel, reach the top, represent the country in the most popular sports events in the world and became, finally, Colombian branding carriers. Promoters and symbols.

It has become almost mandatory to have the nations branded. Some scholars and academics think that a country as a brand is something that is normality in international relations contexts. Some others even say that it is unavoidable not to be branded.

"The idea that countries behave rather like brands is by now fairly familiar to most marketers, and to many economists and politicians too. Originally a recondite academic curiosity, the notion is gaining broader acceptance, and its value as a metaphor for how

countries can position themselves in the global marketplace in order to boost exports, inward investment, tourism and much more besides, is pretty well understood.”[21]

This sort of prerequisite of having an image is crystal clear, however, the tactics put into action repeat themselves in every different country. There is always a way of doing nation branding, albeit there are slight differences between the mechanisms of application. With rare exceptions, nations want to find their best version and show it to the world. The lack of alternatives to reshape branding implementation is one of the motivations of this research. Nation branding is not only a means of promotion, but it could also be a means of project real countries' personalities.

It seems to be quite complicated telling stories of national identity through branding. Branding does not allow such a broad discourse. There is no time or space for long messages and bad things about certain communities. To have a conversation about Colombian violence within an official launching of a national branding campaign is unthinkable. This would repel tourists, which is one of the flagship projects of branding consultants in general.

"If Central and Eastern Europe tourism is to improve further its level of per capita income, coordination between government action and tourism industry promotion would appear vital to project clear, positive national, regional and destination images that can contextualize and emphasize quality and differentiation… Yet collaboration, networks and partnerships are essential in assisting the generation of appropriate brand images…”[22]

The so-called pretension of 'generation of appropriate images' seems to be a constant in every branding campaign and Colombia is no exception. Colombian branding officials argue that the negative aspects are public record and nation branding does not have to amplify those bad images.[23] However, to make a strong case in favor of the "generation of good images" is problematic when it comes to national identity.

In any case, the effectiveness of branding campaigns has been questioned by some academic researchers. Are there visible and noticeable indicators of progress after a branding

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[21] Simon Anholt, „Nation-brands and the value of provenance", în Nigel Morgan (ed.), *Destination branding: creating the unique destination proposition*, 2. ed., reprinted, Butterworth-Heinemann, Amsterdam, 2008, p. 28.

[22] Derek Hall, „Branding and national identity: the case of Central and Eastern Europe", în Nigel Morgan (ed.), *Destination branding: creating the unique destination proposition*, 2. ed., reprinted, Butterworth-Heinemann, Amsterdam, 2008, pp. 124–125.

[23] See the interviews with Colombian branding officials in Case Study Chapter.

campaign? Perhaps it is something more of a mid-term, long-term measure, and it would be justifiable that it depends also on the country, investment, and so on. However,

"…*The ideal promise of helping nations redistribute the world's health more fairly by branding the nation is unreliable, and that branding the nation in order to achieve the nation's interest in the long-run proves to be naïve in some cases. The phenomenon of branding nations is relatively young, just two decades old, yet it is already proving to be, if not a manipulation of marketing into the gains of elites, a naïve promise of using marketing theory and practice for the 'greater good' with the moral intention of producing a fairer world and happier nations. Questioning the unification of nation branding promise can alert practitioners to the importance of aligning national aims and identity with nation-branding programs, and to the integrity of such applications.*"[24]

The alignment and the finding of a point of convergence between branding and identity is something that can be possible by means of sports discourses and athletes that, at the same time, represent national values and make them known to the world.

If economic success is not assured, it seems that the whole point of making nation branding must be rethought and redirected. Maybe 'thinking out the box' is just building an authentic and more realistic branding. Sports enables a space where national identities cannot be neglected. Sports are also a scenario where countries promote themselves with positive connotations through national athlete's victories. The perfect 10 of Nadia Comaneci in Montreal was, indeed, a perfect 10 for Romania. Sportsmen and sportswomen were also ordinary people with normal problems, but, in Colombia, normal problems could be serious difficulties and many of them have suffered the consequences of violence, conflict, drug trafficking, and poverty. Their discourses and stories are tales of national identity and reality checks, but the drawbacks and the obstacles they have overcome are, as well, narrations of national identity. They did not have many alternatives growing up, but somehow, they made it. These circumstances made them excel and be representatives of Colombian colors in the most prominent sports tracks, fields, trails, and so on, conferring them a symbolic position as national brands and national identity carriers, country promoters, and reliable branders.

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[24] R. Al-Abdulrazak, „Is the promise of nation branding sustainable?", *The 6th International Conference on Contemporary Marketing Issues,* Athens, Greece, 2018, p.3.

Structure of the thesis

This research is divided into four chapters, which compiled the whole process of inquiry and analysis of nation branding practices. The Colombian branding campaign is the main reference and case study. The first chapter is the literature review, which has three sub-sections. The first one is the discussion of *problems and debates* in the specialized literature about nation branding and its respective classifications. This initial phase contains three parts: the first one discusses the emergence of a new critical and hermeneutical branch that is opposed to the neoliberal and economic-centered approach of branding consultants and first-generation scholars; the second one emphasizes the lack of congruence between identities pointed out by the academic world as a result of nation branding practices. It also shows some important contributions to the notion of national identity to specialized literature; the third sub-section discusses the idea of Commercial Nationalism. Nation branding, itself as a component of Commercial Nationalism, has inherent manifestations of late capitalism, which explains its profit-based logic. The second subchapter of the literature, in which are identified the *questions and hypotheses* among the different scholars, consists of four sections. The first one explains how nation branding, as marketing expression, is also a soft power manifestation. The following part of the sub-section *questions and hypotheses* discusses the way in which national identity, being an organic process, is turned into an artificial asset and used as a soft power resource. The two remaining parts address the issue of mass media, soft power, and mediatization of diplomacy, and question the efficacy of branding as a soft power mechanism.

Contributions and gaps is the third sub-section of the *Literature Review* chapter. This section is divided into four segments: the first one starts to approach the topic of sports as nation branding instrument and enhancer of nationalism and national identity. The subsequent subsection focused on the capacity of hosting sports Mega-Events and its influence on branding nations due to the apparent sensation of a healthy economy and wellbeing that countries must have in order to make huge investments like these. The final sub-section reveals the gap in the actual literature. There are no studies about honest nation branding through sports and sportsmen, nor any attempts of solving the split-identity issue and certainly not in the Latin-American or Colombian context. .

The *theory* chapter has four subchapters, the first one has two parts: in these two parts the neocolonialist, cultural imperialism and post-colonialist discourse implied in the practice of branding identities is debated.

The second subchapter of the *theory* section is titled '**The building of identity through nation branding and constructivism paradigm'.** This subchapter discusses how countries' national identities are social constructions and not matters of advertising or marketing. The third subsection approaches the subject of identity building through sports. The two parts composing this segment explain the relations between sports, identity, and social constructions. The fourth subchapter raises the possibility of states' formation of identity through sportsmen and the analysis is made through a critical constructivism perspective.

The next chapter is *Methodology.* This section has three subchapters: **Data Collection, Data Reduction**, and **Data Analysis**. The Collection segment has three sections: the first one reflects on the implications and dynamics of sports in processes if national identity and the reasons why sports offer an ideal scenario for nationalism expressions and national identity constructions; the second one narrates the main characteristics of Colombian context, history and stories and how magic realism has permeated reality and literature: and the third one connects and identifies how magic realism also affects the life-stories of Colombian sportsmen. **Data Reduction** has two parts: the first section explains the way in which sports have repercussions in national identity constructions, and, the second section, talks about subjective life stories as a reconstruction of history. The **data analysis** is performed in two subsections. The first subsection discusses the construction of identity through everyday interaction and discourses, and not only mainstream media and political discourse; the second one talks about the deconstruction of the official version of identities through the exploration of the multiplicity of voices and discourses, which could offer a solution to the incongruence presented as a result of nation branding.

The *Case Study* is the last chapter of this research. It is divided into: **Data Interpretation, Results and Discussion.** The data interpretation subsection is the largest and has three segments. The first one has, on its part, two different elements: a review of the whole process of Colombian nation branding campaigns since this instrument was implemented by government officials and, the other one, is the result of two interviews with

two Colombian government employees involved with branding directly. The conversation with both women offers a good overview of the actual situation of Colombian Brand. The second one is a contestation and a critic of the process of nation branding in the South American country: its flaws and strategies of commodization and denial of negative autochthonous problems. The third subsection discusses how the Colombian nation can be redefined and redirected branding with a more honest exercise through sport narratives and protagonists of three relevant disciplines for the country. It is argued, as well, that the Colombian athletes are branders, who brand the nation while narrate real stories of national identity.

The **Results** section shows the ability of sports narratives and life stories as authentic branders and how they contribute to reducing the incongruence between identity and branding because they are products of the reality, but at the same time are promoters of the country. And, finally, the **Discussion** subchapter of the *case study* makes a strong case for the deconstruction of nation branding neoliberal, post-colonialist, and cultural imperialist structures using sports discursive practices. Life stories of great and famous Colombian athletes, who had to suffer the awful consequences of the conditions of this nation (in some regions), and the way in which they managed to turn their lives into successful sports deeds, explains how they can show real identity practices while branding the nation.

The last piece of this research wraps up and rounds out the arguments put forward. The *conclusions* section is divided into three parts. The first one is the **Summary of Results, in** which is settled the need to modernize or rebuild the nation branding logic with the aim of solving the split-identity issue. This is made possible through life narratives in sports: an instrument that fixes the problem and allows Colombia to design a more real and honest branding. The second segment is **Limitations**, in which is discussed the restrictions and issues inherent to this research work such as lack of quantitative analysis, the absence of the practical implementation of the proposed model, and so on. And the last subsection is titled **Future Research Agenda,** in which are raised questions and possibilities of further research such as application of the sports narratives in other countries in addition to Colombia, the exploration of other identity manifestations different from football, etc.