

**ISRAEL'S USE OF SPORTS FOR
NATION BRANDING AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

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DEDICATIONS

To my family, friends, colleagues, faculty, and students:

Walk on with hope in your heart and you'll never walk alone.

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ABSTRACT

Since 1967, Israel's image has been dramatically deteriorating, partly because of not having clear strategies regarding soft power and public diplomacy (Gilboa, 2006). The purpose of this study is to analyze how Israeli sports organizations have used sports for nation branding and public diplomacy. The research question was: How do Israeli sports organizations use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy? For the conceptual framework I drew mostly from theories in place branding research, public diplomacy, sports diplomacy, and soft power. Coming from a constructivist ontology and epistemology, I used qualitative methodology. During December 2017, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 11 members from Israeli sports organizations and three members of Israeli governmental agencies. After analyzing the results, five themes emerged from the data: (a) *The Conflict*, (b) *Hosting Sports Events*, (c) *Representation*, (d) *Relations with the State*, and (e) *Challenges and Opportunities*. This study is significant and contributes to existing knowledge on two main levels: (a) the specific case of Israel and (b) theories and conceptual frameworks on public diplomacy, nation branding, and related fields. Based on the findings of this study, I came up with 12 practical recommendations to practitioners in Israel, that some of them can apply to other countries that face similar situations. The recommendations : (a) *Develop a sports diplomacy strategy*, (b) *Brand Israel as a "SportTech" Nation*, (c) *Acknowledge the conflict and prepare for escalation*, (d) *Improve inclusion and emphasize diversity*, (e) *Use athletes and organizations for public diplomacy, not advocacy*, (f) *Focus more on participation-sports tourism*, (g) *Aim beyond commemoration*, (h) *Develop the*

Maccabiah Games further, (i) Encourage representation in international federations, (j) Emphasize ethical policies, (k) Improve and expand collaborations with foreign countries, and (l) Consider the themes found in this study. This study also shows that even in a country that is going through one of the most complicated prolonged conflicts in the world, whenever there is formal collaboration between the state and sports organizations, sports can still be useful tool for soft power purposes.

PREFACE

When coming back to Israel from covering the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, which was a personal and professional dream, the president of my company asked me to bring him all the articles I wrote during the Olympics. A few days later he sent me a short note saying that I had come back different. At first, I did not give this short sentence any meaning, but as the days, weeks and months went by, I started to wonder: “Did I go to China one Yoav and came back another? Did they get to me? Did the Chinese managed to change the way I saw China? Did that reflect in my coverage?” I went back and read again everything I wrote. I noticed that in the preparations for the Olympics and before the Opening Ceremony I had focused more on the socio-political environment in China and was very critical about it. As the Games started, however, I focused on the competitions, while mentioning the exciting environment in Beijing, exposing also the rich historical culture of China. “Well, I’m just one of many journalists, but if China managed to make many of us focus on other aspects of the country and not just negative sides of the regime, maybe that can influence our audiences as well,” I thought to myself. “And if China can do that, what about Israel?” I asked myself. That was the moment I started to think about the power of sports as a tool for nation branding and public diplomacy. I wrote this dissertation at the University of Tennessee with its community of faculty, students, and staff, whom I thank dearly for embracing me with open arms, helping me to reach my potential and for making Rocky Top feel like sweet home to me. Since coming back from Beijing, I have covered, researched, and attended relevant national and international sports events in Israel, Greece, Canada, England, Spain,

Germany, the United States and Brazil, including the 2012 Olympic Games from happy and glorious London and the 2016 Olympic Games from marvelous Rio de Janeiro, where I also conducted research for the University of Tennessee. Yet, this study is the highest peak of a decade-long journey that took me to research and cover sports all over the world. I hope this is a beginning of a new chapter and not the end of the journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Purpose.....	4
Research Question	4
Significance.....	5
Delimitations and Limitations.....	6
Subjectivity Statement and Positionality	7
Organization of the Dissertation	11
Chapter Two: Literature Review	14
Israel’s Public Diplomacy.....	14
Brand Israel	20
Framing Israel	22
Israel’s Collective Identity	24
Study Context.....	29
Sports Organizations and the State of Israel	49
Theoretical Framework	58
Comparing Nation Branding, Public Diplomacy, and National Identity.....	66
International Relations, Public Diplomacy, and Soft Power	70
Culture and Sports Diplomacy.....	75
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	79
Epistemology	79
Methods and Procedures	80
Participants.....	81
Data Collection	82
Data Analysis	85
Credibility and Trustworthiness.....	91
Chapter Four: Findings	95
Theme 1: The Conflict	98
Theme 2: Hosting Sports Events.....	119
Theme 3: Representation	141
Theme 4: Relations with the State	173
Theme 5: Challenges and Opportunities.....	185
Chapter Five: Discussion	206
Implications for Israel’s Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy.....	206
Theoretical, and Conceptual Implications	231
Significance and Contributions.....	237
Practical Recommendations.....	255
Future Research	259
Conclusions.....	261
References.....	267
Appendices.....	293
Vita.....	301

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Participants.....	83
Table 2. Themes and Categories.....	98

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes how Israel has used sports to shape the country's brand and for public diplomacy purposes. The image and reputation of Israel have changed significantly over the years (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006). According to Eitan Gilboa, communication researcher from Bar-Ilan University in Israel (Gilboa, 2006), Israel had a positive international image between 1948 when it became independent until the 1967 Six Days War, when Israel occupied Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Israel also received international sympathy when engaging in a peace processes between 1977 and 1977 during the peace agreement with Egypt and during the Oslo Accords in 1993-1994. Israel also received international sympathy during the first Gulf War, while being attacked by Iraq in 1991. Professor Eli Avraham, a communications researcher from Haifa University in Israel further reviewed various shifts of Israel's international image since its declaration of independence in 1948 (Avraham, 2009). Accordingly, between 1948 and 1967 Israel was internationally perceived as a place for Jewish immigrants who were building the only democratic country in the region, facing various challenges that threatened its existence. Israel was perceived as "the David against the Goliath of the Arab countries, which failed to destroy it" (Avraham, 2009, p. 3). After Israel's victory in the 1967, Israel Defense Force (IDF) and military power became a central component in Israel's image. Occupying the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, as well as the next wars with Arab states and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian dispute not only reinforced the centrality of power in Israel's image, but Israel became the Goliath in the conflict in the eyes of international media, which tends to sympathize with the weaker side.

In September 2000, the second Intifada, the Palestinian-uprising, burst, signifying the collapse of the optimism of the Oslo Agreement (Gilboa, 2006). According to Gilboa (2006), since then, Israel's reputation has been systematically scrutinized. Gilboa argued Israel has systematically been unfairly criticized by international media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). He contended that Israel is the only nation in the world that is constantly under attack for its right to exist, that almost all countries in the world do not recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and Israel's policies are being compared with those of Apartheid and even Nazi-Germany (Gilboa, 2006).

Using sports to improve the image and reputation of a place and achieve social, political, and economic goals goes back at least 3,000 years ago, to Ancient Greece in 776 BC (Miller, 2004). In Ancient Greece different City States used the competitions in Ancient Olympia to showcase their wealth and culture, build political relations with other City States and improve their reputation while building local pride celebrating their winners (Miller, 2004). Perhaps the most significant impact the Ancient Olympic Games had, however, was by becoming the most important Pan-Hellenic tradition. It brought the City States together by celebrating common traditions under a united Greece.

The term public diplomacy was applied during the Cold War (Cull, 2008; Gilboa, 2006) referring to the process of international organizations trying to achieve foreign policy goals by engaging with foreign publics. Gilboa (2006) argued that while classic public diplomacy refers mostly to states, new public diplomacy refers also to non-state actors. The term soft power refers to the ability to shape preferences of others and getting them to do what you want through attraction without the use of payments or of military force

(Nye, 2004). Nye (2004) who coined the term argued that the three main resources of soft power are culture, political values and foreign policy. Cultural diplomacy (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992) refers to the way culture is used for public diplomacy and soft power purposes.

Public diplomacy also played a role in the competitions in the Ancient Games, especially through the peaceful tradition of “Ekecheiria,” a declared cease-fire to ensure a secure passage for all the delegation to come from the different City States to Olympia even if they were at war with each other (Miller, 2004). In more modern times, countries, cities and communities have been using sports for public diplomacy (Arning 2013) and branding purposes (Preuss, 2015) to achieve social, political, and financial goals (Chalip, 2006), and improve the image of the country. The international exposure, the focus on culture, and peaceful values in sports make it a useful tool for countries to use soft power (Nye, 2004) to achieve international goals and improve their public diplomacy.

The term place branding comes from business studies perspectives that focus on management and marketing (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993), and in scholarly work is also referred to as Nation Branding (Olins, 2002), Destination Image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Nadeau et al., 2008) or Country Brand (Jun et al., 2009). The field is analyzed through two main approaches: Product-based (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 1993; Johansson, 1989) which refers to the attributes of a product associated with a certain place or country and Destination-based (Nadeau et al., 2008) analyzing the image of a country as a tourism destination (Kang & Perdue, 1994; Nadeau et al., 2008). The field contextualizes traditional branding and marketing theories and approaches such as brand equity (Keller,

1993) to states, countries, cities and regions, trying to maximize their capabilities. While there is a difference between a place and a nation, in this study, when discussing Israel, the terms place branding and nation branding are used interchangeably.

Sports had a political role in the creation of the State of Israel (Kaufman & Galily, 2009), in shaping Israel's national identity (Bernstein, 2007; Hotam, 2015) and for nation branding purposes (Dart, 2016). In the context of the Olympic Movement, Israel has a history of being associated with international politics, which at times overshadow the festive competitions (Alperovich, 2007; Galily, 2007; Harif, 2011). Whether it is through boycotts, exclusion, terrorism or demand for commemoration, Israel is constantly recognized with armed conflicts, which instead of an opportunity to be associated with a global celebration becomes a liability for Israel's country image, for Israel's public diplomacy and for the branding of Israel.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze how Israeli sports organizations have used sports for nation branding and public diplomacy. The study focuses on official Israel, which is defined as official representatives of relevant Israeli sports organizations, such as the National Olympic Committee of Israel (NOCIL) and representatives of national sports federations and national sports associations, and members in policy-making positions at the relevant governmental ministries.

Research Question

How do Israeli sports organizations use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy?

Significance

This study is significant as it discusses sports—often seen as a useful tool for countries to reposition themselves internationally and through public diplomacy and place branding (Arning, 2013; Chalip, 2006; Heslop et al., 2010)—in the context of a country that has been going through a prolonged conflict, which damages the country's image (Avraham, 2009). Although there has been significant research on Israel's national identity (Galily, 2007; Harif, 2011; Kaufman & Galily, 2009), there has been limited academic research in the area of nation branding and Israel and Israel's public diplomacy (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006). There has been even less research regarding the role sport has in this context (Bar, Yarchi, & Galily 2017; Dart, 2016). The study focuses on the situation in Israel, as of the end of 2017.

Israeli sports organizations are partly funded by the State of Israel and their mandate is regulated through Israeli Sports Law (Nevo, 2018a), the Regulation in Gambling in Sport Law (Nevo, 2018b) and are defined as public authorities by the Ministry of Justice through the Freedom of Information Law (Nevo, 2018c). Israeli sports have historical roots in the Israeli political system (Harif, 2011; Kaufman & Galily, 2009). On the other hand, sports organizations in Israel comply with international regulations that prohibit political interferences (FIFA, 2011; International Olympic Committee, 2015; Olympicsil, 2018). The sensitive position of sports organizations in a very sensitive political situation of the State of Israel, make this research unique and significant. This study fills gaps in understanding the role of sports in Israel's nation branding and public diplomacy (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006). It adds to the literature on sports and national identity in Israel in the first decades of the twenty first century

(Kaufman & Galily, 2009) and opens a new line of research. I discuss more specific future research towards the end of Chapter Five: Discussion.

Delimitations and Limitations

While there are multiple factors that impact Israel's public diplomacy and Israel's nation branding through sports, the study focuses only on official Israel. Interviewing Israeli athletes and coaches who competed and coached abroad and might have influenced the image of Israel are beyond the scope of the study. Moreover, interviewing the families of the 1972 Munich victims, who have pushed for an international commemoration for their murdered loved-ones, is also beyond the scope of this study.

While this study analyzes official Israel, the main group of participants that is analyzed is sports organizations. While sports organizations are sanctioned by the Israeli government to regulate sports and are funded by the Israeli government, they do not necessarily represent governmental policies. Due to lack of response from potential participants from policy-making organizations, only three participants from governmental ministries were interviewed and their responses were not coded, but used to contextualize, compliment or contradict the responses from participants for sports organizations. Thus, only parts of official Israel are represented in this study.

Country image is an outcome of nation branding and public diplomacy (Fan, 2010). This study focuses on what Israel is trying to do. The study does not measure how the image of Israel is perceived by foreign audiences. There are of course limitations based on the timetable, funding and accessibility, as all the data collection took place during December 2017, there was a very specific timeframe that participants had to fit in

to. This study also focuses on the situation as of the end of 2017. Although there is not enough academic research on the history of sports, nation branding and public diplomacy in Israel, this study focuses on events and issues happening during the writing of the dissertation. The literature review discusses events from the establishment of the Zionist Movement in the late nineteenth century and until the end of the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games.

The year 2017 was also an important year for Israel's sports diplomacy and nation branding, as the country hosted several sports events including the twentieth Maccabiah Games and it was a post-Olympic year, after the Munich Victims were commemorated in the Olympic Village in Rio de Janeiro. Events that took place during the last quarter of 2016 and during 2017 were discussed by the participants. I analyzed the results and completed writing this study during the first two months of 2018. Events that took place in 2018, after the completion of the interviews, or were planned from 2018, are not analyzed in this study.

This study also focuses only on Israel. This study does not aim to explore and analyze the different roles of sports in Palestine or in any other country associated with the Israeli-Arabic dispute. I discuss other Arabic and Muslim countries only in comparison to Israel.

Subjectivity Statement and Positionality

As a socio-constructivist, my positionality has influenced the way I approached, conducted and analyzed this study. Coming from Israel, I am no stranger to domestic and international complexities. I was exposed various times to the Israeli-Arabic conflict

during my professional and academic work and in my involvement through sports and development for peace, and learned how to defuse tension and live in complex environment, respecting other cultures and helping them respect mine. My research focuses on how Israeli sports organizations have used sports for nation branding and public diplomacy. This means, that while the research addresses an armed conflict and even terrorism, I put a lot of emphasis on cross-cultural communication. How could a country that is going through one of the most complex political conflicts the world is facing, manages to connect and engage with other international stakeholders without forcing them to choose a political side. Researching the field, impacts the way I conduct myself in international environments, promoting cross-cultural communication.

Personally, born and raised in Tel-Aviv, Israel, I was influenced by the socio-political environment I grew up in. During my adolescence years in the 1990s, I was influenced both by the optimism of the Oslo Accords and the hope for a peaceful solution between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, but also by multiple terror attacks conducted by different Palestinian terror organizations, including the Hamas that as of 2017 governs Gaza Strip. Since the 1990s, there were over a dozen terror attacks against civilians in buses, cafes, night clubs, shopping malls and other places in my hometown Tel-Aviv and over a hundred terror attacks all over Israel. I also served three years in the Israeli Defense Force in a non-combat position.

I acknowledge that the Israeli-Arabic dispute and the Israeli-Palestinian dispute are among the most contested and controversial political disputes the world is facing. Every term used, the language, definitions such as terrorism, and of course the borders,

are all contested. Growing up in Israel, going through elementary school, junior high and high school in Tel-Aviv, being socialized as a soldier at the Israeli Defense Force, doing a BA and MA in political science departments at Tel-Aviv University, celebrating Israeli and Jewish holidays, including the memorial days, all influenced the way I see the dispute and my beliefs. As almost everything about the conflict is contested and controversial and as I focus on Israel, I use mostly Israeli terminology during the dissertation.

Over the years I have not backed away from controversial issues, and have often been confronted on my different beliefs and biases. I consider myself a liberal and a strong supporter of a two states solution, but also very intolerant towards terrorism, terror sympathizing and any form of Anti-Semitism, which all have an impact on the role of sports in Israel's public diplomacy and nation branding. I have spent years as well as a significant amount of my own money, researching the commemoration of the 11 Israeli athletes, coaches and referees around the world who were murdered in the terror attack in Munich. I see this study as an opportunity for a personal closure on that journey as well.

Because of my past experiences as a journalist and as a researcher, I have known several of the participants prior to this study. There are no financial dependencies with any of the participants, and none of the participants were family members, however with some of the participants I had working relations for over a decade. No information was left out of this study because of personal relations with the participants. My positionality and subjectivity towards this research was manifested at times during the semi-structured interviews, when I instinctively addressed Israel in first person, as "we".

I believe that knowledge is socially constructed and as an Israeli journalist and researcher, my education and social environments impact the way I perceive the world and understand what truth is. I am a proud Israeli, I never forget where I came from, and during the entire time at the University of Tennessee I proudly hung a Maccabi Tel-Aviv scarf above my desk at the office so all my co-workers and students will see my local and national pride as well. At times in this study, I referred to Israel as “we”, consciously or unconsciously signaling the participants that I want their success or the improvement of the current situation. With that said, I am very critical about Israel, and these criticisms were also reflected in this study. As a socio-constructivist I acknowledge that the researcher plays a role in qualitative research when analyzing the results. In the coding process I kept as close as possible to the words and meanings of the participants and in the analysis I made sure that every voice of event participant from a sport organization is represented in every theme. This study, my research, my background as a journalist and my experience teaching at the University of Tennessee, have taught me the power of sports bridging people and changing opinions, but also the dangers and risks the world of sport embodies.

In this ever-changing political climate and with the constant scrutiny the State of Israel is facing, Israel cannot afford to ignore potential branding opportunities and ways to improve its public diplomacy. To face strategic threats, Israel needs to find ways to send appealing messages why the conflict is ongoing. As a researcher, I of course hope that this study will make an impact about the role of sports in the field of nation branding and public diplomacy in countries that go through a prolonged conflict. This study, paves

the way for Israel to better use sports to improve its public diplomacy, and nation branding. As an Israeli, I hope this study will contribute to better communications, better collaboration to more coherent strategies and policies of using sport for improving my country's image.

While this study focus is on Israel, this dissertation has been written in an American university during years when the relations between sports and politics are discussed on a local, a national level and an international level. The question if sports should be a platform for raising social and political issues is one of the most polarizing issues in America. Thus, I have contradictive feelings about the use of sports for soft power.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter One of the dissertation, "Introduction," outlines the study. This chapter introduces the research, the research question, the purpose and significance of the study and the limitations and delimitations. In this chapter I have a subjectivity statement, discussing how I position myself in relations to this research.

Chapter Two of the dissertation, "Literature Review," explores literature related to the study. The literature review ends in 2016, after the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games. In this chapter I discuss existing literature on Israel, nation branding and public diplomacy and the theoretical framework. I also discuss existing literature on how sports shaped the State of Israel including key events that are discussed in relations to the findings of this study, in chapter four as part of the results and discussion. The theoretical framework explores nation branding and public diplomacy, where they overlap and

where they differ. It also explores and analyzes existing literature on the relations between sports, public diplomacy and nation branding, on Israel's public diplomacy and nation branding.

Chapter Three of the dissertation is "Methodology." In this chapter, I explain the research design. The chapter includes discussing the social constructivist ontology and epistemology and the reasoning behind the qualitative methodology of this study. I explain why I chose interviews as my main methods for data collection, and how the interviews were constructed. I also explain the process of participant selection and reaching saturation. In this chapter I also discuss the reasoning behind the questions in the interview guide, which is attached as an appendix along with the consent form and the Institutional Review Board approval letter. In chapter three, I also explain the data analysis, the manual coding and categorizing process and the translation. I also discuss in this chapter how I address Corbin and Strauss' (2008) criteria of constructing good and ethical qualitative research.

Chapter Four is "Findings." Based on the interviews, five themes came out of the data: (1) *The Conflict*, (2) *Hosting Sports Events*, (3) *Representation*, (4) *Relations with the State*, and (5) *Challenges and Opportunities*. In this chapter I discuss the different themes in length. I discuss each theme and each category, giving specific examples from each one of the participants from sports organizations in each theme, and cite participants from sports organizations in each theme.

In Chapter Five "Discussion," I discuss the meaning the data. In this chapter I discuss the results of the study in comparison to existing literature on sports, nation

branding and public diplomacy, and especially in relations to some of the literature that was discussed in Chapter Two. I also discuss how the results compliment and elaborate on literature on Israel's nation branding and public diplomacy. The analysis focuses on implications for Israel and on theoretical and conceptual implications. In this chapter I also explain why this research is significant, give practical recommendations, discuss future research and conclude the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have used various definitions for public diplomacy and place branding. At times those concepts are used interchangeably and embodied similar meanings or at times different scholars defined the terms different (Fan, 2010). In this literature review I discuss existing literature on Israel's public diplomacy, the branding of Israel, Israel's collective identity, relevant literature about the different roles Israeli sports played and the theoretical framework about public diplomacy, nation branding and the role of sports. The literature review focuses on the role of sports in Israel and in the Zionist movement, since the late nineteenth century and until 2016, after the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games.

Israel's Public Diplomacy

Israel's international image has dramatically deteriorated since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Gilboa, 2006). Gilboa (2006) argued that Israel has been neglecting public diplomacy and soft power, and relied primarily on hard power. As a result of not having a clear strategy, Israel has been portrayed in a negative way. One area where Israel failed was the war over language. Gilboa (2006) gave several examples where the used vocabulary is impacting the portrait of Israel. According to Gilboa (2006), Western media has adopted Arabic terms to describe the conflict. The 1982 War between Israel and Lebanon is not called "Operation Peace for Galilee" but "Israel's Invasion to Lebanon" (Gilboa, 2006, p. 722). The territories captured in the Six Days War in 1967 received the biblical name Judea and Samaria, but are referred internationally as the occupied territories. Another sensitive case is the definition of terrorism, as Gilboa (2006)

argued that while “Israel calls Palestinian suicide or homicide bombers ‘terrorists’, but Western and global media and policymakers refer to them as ‘militants’, ‘extremists’, ‘fighters’, ‘gunmen’, ‘activists’ or even ‘guerrilla’” (p. 723). Yet the two terminologies that Gilboa (2006) emphasized as the most damaging and non-representing are the various uses of the word Apartheid such as referring to the barrier wall as the “Apartheid Wall” and the uses of terminology that compares Israel to Nazi Germany, including referring to the Israeli army as the “Zionist SS” and making parallels between the Israeli-Palestinian war to the holocaust.

Another area where according to Gilboa (2006) Israel suffered from a poor reputation is in the United Nations (UN) and international organizations. Gilboa (2006) criticized the UN for systematically discriminating against Israel, voting extremely one-sided anti-Israeli resolutions, while not adopting critical resolutions against countries such as Syria, Saudi Arabia, China and Zimbabwe, which he cynically referred to as “champions of international law and human rights” (p. 724). While there are several Israelis on UN committees, by casting Israel as the world’s worst human rights violation, the hostility of UN and its agencies towards Israel presents a challenge to Israel’s public diplomacy.

Gilboa (2006) pointed out several failures of Israel’s public diplomacy, starting with former Prime Minister Shimon Peres who “held the opinion that if a country has good policies, it does not need public relations, and if the policy is bad, the best PR in the world will not help” (p. 735). This position, proved to be damaging for the image of Israel. Another failure was the use of the Hebrew word “Hasbara” (explanation or

advocacy) to refer to public diplomacy. The term conveyed a defensive and apologetic approach to public relations. The term is considered apologetic and defensive because Israel constantly needs to explain its policies and practices when being portrayed as the occupier by international media, and other countries and organizations (Aouragh, 2016; Gilboa, 2006; Steinberg, 2006). Gilboa (2006) also pointed out criticism by Israelis from home and from abroad against Israeli policy, including calls for boycotts, as a damaging factor to Israel's public diplomacy.

Gilboa (2006) suggested several implementations that Israel needed to take to stop the deterioration of its international image: (a) new strategic planning, (b) professional training to Israeli official abroad and Israeli foreign service, (c) focus on improving Israel's reputation in Europe, (d) improve Israel's cyber public diplomacy, (e) increase funding for public diplomacy programs, (f) utilize non-governmental public diplomacy programs, (g) brand Israel differently, and (h) educating the Israeli public about the importance of public diplomacy.

Gilboa's (2006) shed light on the implications of neglecting public diplomacy and the damage caused to Israel's image and reputation. A decade later, Aouragh (2016) analyzed Israel's public diplomacy and also criticized the use of the word "Hasbara" for public diplomacy, arguing that while public diplomacy is used for soft power purposes, "Hasbara" does not fit in a post-conflict framework, is defensive and fails to shift from propaganda to public diplomacy. Moreover, the article argued that "*Hasbara* is best understood as the manufacturing of discontent with, or toward, Palestinian self-determination, while simultaneously constituting consent for Israel's dominance.

However, set within conventional interpretations of public diplomacy, *Hasbara* involves apparent ambiguities” (Aouragh, 2016, p. 273).

Aouragh (2016) argued that Israel has shifted to a “Hasbara 2.0” era, in the digital age and that while military conflicts occur a second war takes place in the cyberspace. Aouragh (2016) reviews three military campaigns in the last decade: Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Operation Pillar Cloud (2012) and Operation Protective Edge (2014), arguing that the destruction in Gaza Strip, damages the Israeli image. One of the findings is that the changing technology and the growing importance of social media required a change in the approach of “Hasbara” as a public diplomacy tool.

Israel’s public diplomacy went through several changes (Aouragh, 2016), including the government being more oriented towards public diplomacy, especially online, and a more active military on social media. Videos of destructions caused by the Israeli military and especially of injured or dead Palestinian children that were uploaded to YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, were circulated around the world. This required Israel to react in a more assertive way on social media, including having the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) open its own social media channels and take part in public diplomacy efforts. This is a very significant shift by the Israeli army, a closed organization that due to the public diplomacy war on social media had to open up.

In the last decades, Israel has been involved mostly with low intensity conflicts, rather than full scale wars. Being the stronger side, Israel’s policies have been criticized by international media and by international organizations and agencies. Cohen and Cohen (2011) raised a security dilemma, in the context of compliance with international law

while trying to protect national security as the IDF now has a branch focused on International Law especially regarding targeted killings. That was another shift in policies by the Israeli army, this time a tactical one, based on international criticism that damaged Israel's image.

Aouragh (2016) argued that the use of "Hasbara" was effective for constructing a discourse used by pro-Israeli lobbies. However, the message of the lobbies has been weakened especially in progressive university campuses that adopt the pro-Palestinian campaigns such as Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) calling for boycotts against Israel and comparing Israeli to Apartheid South Africa. The Israeli government identifies BDS as a strategic threat, having more "Hasbara" programs and campaigns in universities.

The challenges Israel's image is facing on university campuses, in the United Nations and by NGOs, emphasizes the struggles Israel has when it comes to the use of soft power. As mentioned by Nye, soft power is not about military dominance, but about attractiveness, and in this sphere Israel has been struggling. According to Steinberg (2006), Israel has been constantly scrutinized by the superpowers of human rights non-governmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and local pro-Palestinian NGOs who pursue anti-Israeli agendas. Steinberg (2006) argued that adopting human rights rhetoric and international norms, the language used promotes political goals.

In his case studies, Steinberg (2006) found that Israel was very isolated in the diplomatic environment. He gives as an example the UN World Conference against

Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance that was held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, a year after the outburst of the second Intifada between Israel and the Palestinians. Steinberg points out the dissonance between the hundreds of Israelis killed by Palestinian terrorism, to the systematic portrayal of Israel as the aggressor and the occupier. NGOs used the conference to expand attacks against Israel, de-legitimize Israel, compare Zionism to racism and lead to indictment of Israel and Israeli policy, comparing Israel to Apartheid and Israel's policies to ethnic cleansing. Based on the Durban conference, NGOs campaigns for boycotts and sanctions against Israel, Palestinian even during terror attacks, grew and became a strategic threat to Israel's public diplomacy.

Much like Gilboa (2006) and Aouragh (2016), Steinberg (2006) also pointed out that Israel was late to react and did not have a clear anti-counter public diplomacy strategy. That resulted in changes in the Israeli government approach to public diplomacy, including appointing low-level positions in the foreign ministry to monitor NGOs activities. Israel's has gradually started to respond by questioning NGOs transparency, if governments are funding the organizations or who are the donors and exposing hidden political agendas. While NGOs pose a constant threat to Israel's public image, after decades of ignoring the problem, Israel has a response strategy. According to Steinberg (2006), "An alliance of Western democracies against NGO-led ideological and political campaigns may provide the most effective counter-strategy for Israel" (p. 765).

Brand Israel

Much like Gilboa (2006), Avraham (2009) also argued that Israel has an image problem, however he analyzes it from a place branding perspective, looking at the branding challenges Israel is facing while going through a prolonged conflict. To address the way Israel is trying to improve its international image Avraham (2009) analyzed which terminologies, slogans, images and visuals Israel's marketers used in order to combat negative image characteristics. The researcher also analyzed the relationships with the international media. To answer these questions and to understand the source, audience and message (SAM) strategies used by the marketers, Avraham (2009) analyzed dozens of advertisements, news articles and interviews with Israeli officials in local and international magazines. Based on the analysis Avraham identified three kinds of strategies:

1. Source-focused strategies, such as attempting to influence the media, cooperating and developing media relations, putting pressure on the media, blocking the media, replacing the media with alternatives and substitutes, using celebrities and opinion leaders, using the film industry, to invite target audience to come and see for themselves, and using the internet as an alternative to the media.
2. Message-focused strategies such as conveying opposite messages to the problematic image characteristics, softening the hard message, expanding the image, branding opposite to the stereotypes and ridicule the stereotype.
3. Audience-focused strategies such as emphasis on similarities and relevance, using familiar cultural symbols and association with strong brands.

Avraham (2009) concluded that although Israeli marketers are using an impressive array of strategies, “As long as media reports focus on conflict and violence, tanks and soldiers, it is probably almost impossible for a country to project different images or brand itself in a much more attractive way” (p. 212). Avraham’s research is significant as it is one of the only academic researches done on the challenges of branding of Israel and it sheds more light on the centrality of the Israeli-Arabic dispute in the attempts to improve Israel’s image.

According to Gilboa (2006), American public relations experts who measured attitudes towards Israel found that “Americans view Israeli primarily as a grim, war-torn country, rough, rigid, and dangerous” (p. 741). They recommended attempt to shift Israel’s branding towards daily life, culture, and high technology. Several researchers, while not directly conducting research on Israel’s image through public diplomacy and nation branding, did indirectly address some of the issues Gilboa (2006) raised regarding Israel being perceived as a technologically advanced. Doron (2011) analyzed the role of technology in Israel’s political system. Although his research focuses on the internal political system of Israel and the use of Knesset Member of website during election campaigns, he starts his article by giving an example of the Lebanese government blaming Israel for their own internal problems broadcasting a message that Israeli infiltrated their communication all means and is tapping the phones of the Lebanese. Doron (2011) also gave an example of the Iranian national TV showing a clip that blames an Israeli virus installed into Iranian computers for delaying their nuclear program. Doron (2011) tried to show that Israel is perceived as being capable of doing that, due to the

country's image as high technological, which is based on having 63 Israeli companies listed in Nasdaq as of the beginning of 2009. Hassman (2008) analyzed Israel's brand and addressed the potential of branding Israel as a high technological country. He argues that the focus on technology can help create a positive narrative, such as using the technology for the well-being of humanity (Hassman, 2008). Branding Israel as a country that focuses on global aid, fits an Israeli narrative that Hassman (2008) refers to as "Tikun Olam" – repairing the world. While Doron addressed Israel as "high-tech nation" (Doron, 2011, p. 314), other researchers describe Israel's image as a high developed technological country and a "Start-Up Nation" (Gazit & Sauber, 2014, p. 220). The term was coined by Jewish practitioners Dan Senor and Saul Singer (2009) who wrote the book "Start-up nation: The story of Israel's economic miracle" (2009), analyzing how through a culture of adaption and innovation Israel managed not only to survive extreme political and social adversities, but to become one of the leading countries in terms of research and development, and an attractive place for start-up companies to grow.

Framing Israel

When it comes to Israel's coverage in international media, most researchers argue that international media tends to take the side of the weaker party, which in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute it means the Palestinians (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006, Steinberg, 2006). One of the paradoxes in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is that although Israel has a stronger military, Israel does not win the war over public image. Gilboa (2006) argued that the media are not objective observers but tend to take an active anti-Israeli side in the Israeli-Arabic conflict. Gilboa (2006) argued that most of the research on international media was either on American and European news outlets, finding that British media

coverage of the Israeli-Arabic dispute “represents the prevailing anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic trends in European media coverage” (Gilboa, 2006, p. 729). Gilboa argued that journalists rarely acknowledge their biases, or that they actively campaign on behalf of the “victim.” Gilboa (2006) criticized Israel for not having an ineffective information policy to contradict the biased coverage. The result is immediate negative coverage that influences public opinion and policymakers.

Cavari, Yarchi and Pindyck (2017) conducted a longitudinal study of news coverage of Israel in US media, from 1981 to 2013. They conducted a content analysis of 56,490 news articles from the New York Times, the Washington Post and USA Today, over a period of three decades that included key events such as the First (1982) and the Second (2006) Israel-Lebanon wars, the First (1987-1992) and the Second (2000-2005) Intifadas, the Oslo Peace Agreements (1993-1995), the Peace Agreement with Jordan (1994), the first Gulf War (1991), the Gaza Strip Disengagement (2005), multiple low intensity conflicts, and global events such as the end of the Cold War, the 9/11 terror attacks and the Arab Spring. Their analysis focused on the intensity of the coverage, salient topics and topic co-occurrence.

The study (Cavari, Yarchi & Pindyck, 2017) showed that in the last decade there has been a decline in the coverage of Israel in US media compared to the coverage in the twentieth century. The high peaks of coverage happen mostly during conflict, especially when military operations such as Operation Wooden Leg (1985), the Second Intifada (October 2000) and the Second Lebanon War (2006). The periods of the Oslo Peace Accords were perceived as less newsworthy and received less coverage. The five main

topics the authors found in the coverage were: Conflict, Peace, Palestinians, Military and Security and Territories. When analyzing which topics are discussed alongside each other the authors add two more topics: Terrorism and Lebanon. This research is important as it corresponds with Gilboa (2006) and Avraham (2009), showing that international media is mostly covering Israel in conflict-related situations, emphasizing conflict aspects of the image of Israel.

Malinsky (2015) analyzed 10 articles from the *New York Times* and 10 from the Israeli daily newspaper *Haaretz*, analyzing the reporting of Palestinian casualties during 2014 Israel-Gaza War, “Operation Protective Edge.” The study found that six of the 10 articles published in the *New York Times* mentioned the number of Palestinian children killed in the war, while only two of them mentioned the number of Palestinian militants killed. While the sample size is too small to generalize, it does shed light on different frames used by international media that have emotional impact regarding Israel’s image.

Israel’s Collective Identity

Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) argued that country image had been studied from the lens of sociology, including collective identity. As seen previously several researchers pointed out attempts to de-legitimatize the existence of Israel. Israel has been a Jewish and Democratic State, ensuring political rights regardless of religion. The nature of Israel as a Jewish State has been stated in the declaration of Independence in 1948 (Declaration of establishment of the State of Israel, 1948). However, while the declaration of Independence ensures freedom to all religions, it does not that Israel must be a democracy:

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions. (Declaration of establishment of the State of Israel, 1948)

The definition of the regime type in Israel has been contested. Samocha (1997) argued that when defining Democracies, categorizing Israel has been contested. According to Samocha, Israel is not a Liberal Democracy or a Constitutional Democracy, as there is no separation between citizenship and religion and that a formal constitution has never been approved. An example of Israeli being a Jewish State is the Law of Return, which allows every Jew to immigrate to Israel and to be granted citizenship. Making Aliyah is a term that describes immigrations of Jews to Israel (Galily, 2009). On the other hand, Samocha also disagree with defining Israel (a non-Democratic ethnic nation, as Arabic minorities enjoy civilian rights and participate in the political arena, participating in elections and being represented in the Israeli parliament. According to Samocha (1997), “Arab minority also appreciates its Israeli citizenship so dearly that it cannot contemplate leaving the country, and that it believes in Israeli democracy so strongly that it sees it as an effective tool for affecting appreciable improvement” (p. 204). Samocha classifies Israel as an Ethnic Democracy, which also has several obstacles

and challenges, especially with the definition of citizenship. Much of Israel's Democratic status relies on the strength of Israel's Democracy to ensure that Israeli-Arabs (Palestinians with Israeli citizenship) enjoy full liberal rights under an ethnic Democracy. Palestinians who have not been born in Israel or left Palestine during the 1948 Independence War and do not have an Israeli citizenship, do not enjoy citizenship rights in Israel and the same civic freedoms as Israeli-Arabs. These definitions are constantly being contested, including the Democratic State of Israel, which challenges Israel's public image.

While Samocha (1997) analyzed the collective image of the State of Israel as an Ethnic Democracy, First and Avraham (2011) analyzed Israel's national identity through iconic places in Israel shown in newspaper advertisements. First and Avraham (2011) analyzed 489 advertisements from 1995 to 2005 published in the weekend issues of the three main Israeli newspapers that are read by 80% of the Jewish population of Israel. Their analysis focused on the process of Americanization of Israeli society, finding two main categories of representation of the land of Israel: (a) national symbols and (b) identities in space.

Some of the national symbols First and Avraham (2011) found were the concept of redemption of the land, links between the land of Israel and Jewish people, the use of the Israel flag, the use of the Hebrew language, and Israeli money. The category of identity in space referred to unification of American and Israeli space especially with Jerusalem being mentioned with American places and global cities especially regarding Tel-Aviv becoming a world city in terms of culture and economy, and to local landscape.

Alfasi and Fenster (2005) also analyzed the symbolic meanings of the largest and most influential two cities in Israel: Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. Jerusalem is the contested capital of Israel, and a city that historically has been mentioned with conflict and with religion, being holy to Judaism, Christianity and Islam:

The Jews attachment to Jerusalem dates back to the eleventh century BC, when King David conquered the city; for Christians, the city's holiness derives from Jesus life and his crucifixion there, while for Muslims, its primary religious significance springs from Muhammad's miraculous voyage from Mecca to Jerusalem, and from there to heaven. (Alfasi, & Fenster, 2005, p. 352).

Tel Aviv on the other hand is a much more modern city, associated with the rising of Zionism, being the first Hebrew city established in 1900 (Alfasi, & Fenster; 2005). There are significant cultural differences between Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. While Jerusalem is recognized with history and religion, Tel-Aviv is recognized with freedom, innovation, secularity, and a dynamic spirit. While the Knesset (the Israeli parliament), the Supreme Court, and the President's House are all located in Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv is recognized of being the economic and cultural heart of Israel, with the stock exchange market and the sandy beaches. These cultural and historical differences between local and global ideas and aspirations, impact Israelis' collective identity and the image of the State of Israel.

As history influences Israelis' collective identity, so do bereavement and commemoration (Weiss, 1997), having a significant impact on Israel's society especially

when idolizing the heroism and sacrifice of the fallen. Weiss (1997) analyzed how bereavement and commemoration manifest themselves in Israel through three fields: State institutions such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Defense, the bereaved families themselves and media reactions. Weiss (1997) gave the example of national rituals of commemoration such as the Remembrance Day Ceremony for fallen soldiers in schools taking place a week after the Holocaust Memorial Day and one day prior to Israel's Independence Day that constructs a national narrative of sacrifice and salvation. According to Weiss (1997) Israel is obsessed with commemoration not only because of the frequency of wars, but because it serves political goals of being a mediator between the past and the present, engaging in social mobility and creating a national mythology by creating a link between Zionism Ideology and Jewish history to the Land of Israel.

Zerubavel (2014) analyzed the role of collective commemoration, through the use of numbers. According to Zerubavel, even before Israel's independence, the Jewish numerical commemoration was used by the Zionist leaderships. Villages such as Mishmar HaShlosha (Sentinel of the three) and streets such as Two Nurses, streams and hills were memorializing the number of patriotic deaths. After Israel became independent, commemorating fallen heroes through streets, areas, squares and monuments through numbers became a common norm. Examples include the commemoration of the eleven Israelis athletes that were murdered in the terror attack in the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. However, the most salient number that has the most significant impact on Israel's national identity, is six million (Zerubavel, 2014), the

number of Jewish people murdered in the holocaust by Nazi Germany, became an iconic number in Israel's national identity and is used in various ways through commemorations. The immense importance Israel puts on collective commemoration (Zerubavel, 2014) and the obsession (Weiss, 2012) Israel has with using commemoration as a political tool to socialize Israelis and create a national identity that links between Zionism and the land of Israel, also impacts the image of Israel, which is constantly being associated with war and conflict (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006).

Study Context

Israel has an image problem (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006), being associated with the polarizing Israeli-Arabic dispute, which has also manifested in the context of sports (Dart, 2016). Whether it is through boycotts, exclusion, terrorism, or demand for commemoration, since joining the Olympic family, Israel has constantly been recognized with armed conflicts. Instead of an opportunity to be associated with global celebrations, it has become a liability for Israel's public diplomacy, nation branding and country image.

Muscular Judaism and the Zionist Movement. The historical roots of sports and body culture for Israeli identity can be traced back to seventeenth century Europe. According to Kaufman and Galily (2009), the Enlightenment in early seventeenth century brought dramatic changes to the way Jewish communities integrated in Europe. Emergent liberalism, the growth of modern states, and the emancipation of Jewish communities, helped Jewish people to integrate in every sphere of life of European countries, including in local sports. However, the awakening of national movements in Europe, the growing

anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century, and the persecution of Jews, pushed Jewish communities towards self-definition, rather than assimilation. The Zionist solution was to strive to establish a Jewish State in Eretz Israel, the historical homeland of Jewish people. Key leaders in the early development of the Zionist Movement preached the creation of new active Jews, who will physically build the future homeland and take control of their own destiny, such as Yehuda Pinsker, who wrote the book “Auto-Emancipation” and Benjamin Zeev Herzl, author of “The Land of the Jews” and founder of the Zionist Congress that united Jewish communities and Jewish international organizations from the Diaspora. Yet, when it came to body culture and to the creation of a new image of the Jewish persons, who would actively build that land, it was Dr. Max Nordau who coined the phrase “Muscular Judaism” in the second Zionist World Congress in 1898 (Kaufman & Galily, 2009).

The idea behind “Muscular Judaism” was to change the physical perception of Judaism and create “a new Jew” as an antithesis to the negative stereotype of Jews in the Diaspora. Muscular Judaism was to inspire the ideal of an active Jew, who works the land, fights, and builds the future home for Jewish people. The ideal image of the “New Jew” contrasted with the segregated stereotypical bible-studying Yeshiva members. Instead, the new Jew was young, healthy and brave, ready to fight (Harif, 2011). According to Presner (2007), Muscular Judaism was “not entirely unlike the “muscular Christianity” movement in Victorian England, which called for a new Christian masculinity rooted in physical strength and moral grounding (Presner, 2007). Both these movements were part of a growing emphasis on body culture in Europe. Hotam studied

this transformation of the Jewish body and Jewish identity (Hotam, 2015), concluding: “the connection between the building of bodies and identities became central to Zionism, Sport became one of the essential modes of operation that would enable the Jewish (essentially men) body to be transformed” (p. 53). To change the image of Jewish people to a more physical one, Jewish sports clubs developing in Europe were named after biblical Jewish heroes, such as Samson, Bar-Kochva and Yehuda the Maccabi (Kaufman, 2005).

In the era of body culture, European sports clubs thrived. Among them were a number of specifically Jewish sports clubs. According to Galily (2009), by 1913 there were 29 clubs, with total members of 4,500. In the early twentieth century, Jewish sports clubs bearing the name Maccabi were founded in the newly established Jewish cities in Palestine. The name Maccabi is based on Yehuda the Maccabi, a biblical Jewish hero who lead a rebellion against the Greeks in the second century B.C. Jewish sports clubs were especially developed in countries such as Germany, Austria, Hungary, and in Eastern Europe. European body culture, driven by Muscular Christianity and the German Turnen that used gymnastics in the education system (Presner, 2007), a rise in sports clubs, especially in Germany and Eastern Europe, which influenced Jewish Masculinity and Jewish sports club. At the time, Jewish immigration to Eretz Israel increased.

Maccabi Tel-Aviv, which was originally named Rishon leZion-Yafo in 1906 (Maccabi World Union, 2017) was the first Hebrew sports center in Palestine. In 1928, Yosef Yekutieli, one of the heads of the Maccabi center in Israel, proposed to establish

world Maccabi Games, marking the 1,800 years since the Bar-Kochva Rebellion against the Roman Empire in 132 B.C.

The Maccabiah Games. In 1932, the first Maccabiada (later to be named the Maccabiah Games) was held in Israel with 390 participants from 18 countries (Galily, Lidor, & Ben Porat, 2009; Maccabi World Union, 2009). The opening ceremony was held in the newly built Maccabiah Stadium in Tel-Aviv. Through the development of the Games, the opening ceremony of the Maccabiah Games had social, cultural and political significances, showcasing Israeli culture, Israeli innovation and also the Israeli military, raising national pride. The second Maccabiah Games (Maccabi World Union, 2009) took place as Jews in Europe were suffering from the National-Socialist party in Germany. After the games, hundreds of participants remained in the country finding safety from the growing Anti-Semitism in Europe. The 1938 Maccabiah Games were cancelled due to financial issues, riots in Palestine, the rising of the Nazi party and the growing anti-Semitism in Europe, as well as conflicts with British Mandate authorities (Galily, 2009). Thus, the second Maccabiah Games were also the last ones before the establishment of the State of Israel, in 1948.

The third Maccabiah Games eventually took place in 1950 (Galily, 2009), two years after Israel's independence, and one year after the end of the Independence War. By this time, Israeli sports were much better organized than in the 1930s. New facilities had been built including a 50,000 seats stadium in Ramat-Gan. However, by this time, many European Jewish sports clubs that had flourished in the early twentieth century had disappeared, due to the War and Nazi persecution. Many of the clubs' members had been

murdered in the holocaust. With the newly established State of Israel, Maccabiah Games took a more explicit nation building purpose, connecting Jewish people from the Diaspora to the State of Israel. The fourth Maccabiah Games were held in 1953, and since then they take place in Israel every four years. In the summer of 2017 the twentieth edition of the Maccabiah Games took place in Israel (Maccabiah, 2017).

Since the foundation of the Zionist movement in the late nineteenth century, the Maccabiah Games have grown significantly alongside the State of Israel. The Maccabiah Games were one of the most important tools of the Zionist Movement. Although, over the years the games changed, they are still very relevant ever growing and becoming more global every four years. With Israel establishing itself as a strong independent country, yet still facing security threats and International political boycotts, the Maccabiah Games still break records of attendance and participation, bringing tens of thousands tourists to Israel, having a touristic, cultural and even diplomatic role in modern Zionism. One goal of the Maccabiah Games and the Maccabiah Movement that has not changed over the years, is to promote immigration of Jewish people to Israel, which is called making Aliyah.

A history of boycotts and exclusions. In 1934, 14 years before Israel declared independence, the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Palestine, which represented the Jewish community in the British governed State of Palestine, rejected an invitation to participate in the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games because of the rising of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party (Alperovich, 2007). Israel announced its independence on May, 1948, a few months before the Olympic Games in London, the first Olympic Games post-World

War II. However, after pressure by Arabic countries and an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member from Egypt, Israel was not invited to participate in the Games. The bureaucratic reasons were that the newly established State of Israel did not have an official NOC and that by declaring independence the Olympic Committee of Palestine stopped representing the Jewish community (Alperovich, 2007; Galily et al., 2009).

In 1951, the NOC of Israel was established (Alperovich, 2007; Kaufman, 2005) and in 1952 Israel participated in the Olympic Games in Helsinki for the first time (Galily, & Zach, 2002). Since then, boycotts and exclusions followed Israel's participation in the Olympics and other international competitions. Political boycotts around the Israeli-Arabic dispute started in 1956, when Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq boycotted the Games because of the war in Sinai (Guttmann, 2002; Reiche, 2018). In the first decades after its independence, Israel's sports federations and associations were competing under Asian associations. Although Israeli athletes were gaining athletic success, playing against Arabic and Muslim teams and athletes had political implications. In 1962 Israel was not invited to participate in the continental Asian Games held in Indonesia and a decade later Israeli teams were officially excluded from all Asian sports associations (Afek, 1994a). Until acceptance to the European Olympic Committees in 1994, Israeli sports federations were competing under a variety of continental associations.

A common form of sport boycott against Israel is the withdrawal of a competing athlete by claiming an injury (Parry, 2012; Talshir, 2011), thus avoiding institutional sanctions by an international sports federation. A significant political incident, for

example, occurred in the judo competition in Athens 2004. Arash Miresmaeili, Iranian world champion in judo and the Iranian flag carrier in the Opening Ceremony (New York Times, 2004) withdrew from the competition against Udi Vax (Parry, 2012; Rubinstein, 2004). Six years later, Mohammad Soleimani, a Taekwondo fighter from Iran boycotted the gold medal match in the 2010 Youth Olympic Games against Israeli Gili Haimovitz (Aharoni, 2010; Parry, 2012). Since the beginning of the millennium, athletes from Iran, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Sudan boycotted international competitions against Israelis in sports like judo, fencing, taekwondo, tennis, badminton, wrestling and boxing (Aharoni, 2015; Deuel, 2014; Kroshenko, 2014; Sport 5, 2015; Talshir, 2011). The only time Israel boycotted the Olympic Games was in 1980, joining the American-led boycott of the Games in Moscow after the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan (Galily, 2007; Galily, et al., 2009). Yasser Arafat, chairman of Ashraf (later the Palestinian Authority), was a guest of honor of the Soviets in 1980 (Guttmann, 2002).

Since 2005, the Pro-Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS) has tried to pressure sports organizations to boycott Israeli athletes, sports competitions held in Israel, as well as Israeli companies involved with international sports (McLean, 2014; Palestinian BDS National Committee, 2015). Proponents of these efforts compared Israel's involvement in Gaza and the West Bank to Apartheid South Africa, which had been excluded from the Olympic movement because of its racial laws.

Unlike in Apartheid South Africa, in Israel there are no laws restricting citizens from representing Israel. Arabic-Israeli athletes represent Israel in international

competitions, especially through Israel's national football¹ team (Kretcher, 2015; Shor, & Yonay, 2011). The last time, however, an Arabic-Israeli athlete represented Israel at the Olympic Games was football player Rifat "Jimmy" Turk, as part of Israel's national team in the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal (Last, 2008). Unlike, Israeli-Arabic athletes who are Israeli citizens and compete under Israel's sports associations, Palestinian athletes, who are not Israeli citizens, compete under the Palestinian NOC. Since Atlanta 1996, the NOC of Palestine has been represented in the summer Olympic Games.

In the four years between the 2012 Olympic Games in London and the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Israeli athletes continued to suffer from boycotts, exclusion, hostile environments in international competitions, especially when held in Arabic or Muslim countries. Athletes from Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Iran, Palestine and the United Arab Emirates boycotted competitions against Israeli athletes in judo, jiu jitsu, swimming and tennis (Aharoni, February 2015; Aharoni, May 2015; Aldgem, 2014, Korenfeld, May 10, 2015; Korenfeld, May 30, 2015; Kroshenko, 2014). In several cases, Israeli athletes faced visa issues and in the Sailing World Championship in Oman and in the Judo Grand Slam in Abu Dhabi, were forced to compete under the flags of the international federations, and not the Israeli flag and when Israelis won gold medals, the anthem of the International Federation was played and not the Israeli anthem – "HaTikva" (Aharoni & Zanziper, 2015; Etchells, 2015; i24news, 2015; Young, 2017). Prior to the 2016 Games, the IOC put pressure on hosting countries not to allow political

¹ In this study I use the word football when referring to the game that is known in the United States as soccer.

exclusions, threatening that competitions would not be counted as qualifying events, if athletes were to be excluded for political reasons (Zanziper, 2015).

Several political incidents occurred during the 2016 Olympic Games as well: the Lebanese delegation refused to share a bus with the Israeli delegation to the Opening Ceremony; a Saudi athlete withdrew from her judo competition as in the next round she was scheduled to face Gili Cohen from Israel and an Egyptian judoka refused to shake Ori Sasson's hand after losing to the Israeli in the first round of the judo competition (AP, 2016; AFP, 2016; Staff Writer, Al Arabiya English, 2016; Reiche, 2018).

The Munich Massacre. In Israel's Olympic history, the most significant political interference was "The Munich Massacre" (Afek, 2002), the terror attack during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, West Germany. It had immense implications for global terrorism, security of sports events, the Israeli-Arabic dispute, and the relations between Israel and the Olympic movement (Galily et al., 2012; Giulianotti, & Klausner, 2012; Hassan, 2014; Spaaij, 2016). On the night of September 5, 1972, terrorists from Palestinian organization "Black September" entered residence of the Israeli delegation in the Olympic Village, where they murdered Moshe Weinberg and Yossef Romano and kidnapped nine other Israelis. After a long day of negotiations, the terrorists and the hostages were moved to an airbase outside Munich, where during a failed rescue operation, the Israelis were executed from close range (Afek, 2002).

The official remembrance of the events in Munich has political implications. Commemoration of victims of war and terror plays a unifying role in Israel's national identity (Ben-Amos, 2003). According to Zerubavel (2014), Israel especially uses

numbers to commemorate the country's fallen. The most significant number is 6,000,000, a number that in Israel's collective memory is associated directly with the victims of the holocaust. There are streets, squares, and stadiums commemorating the Yod-Alef (in Hebrew: eleven) Munich Victims (Afek, 2002). The main place of commemoration is in Tel-Aviv, the place where annual fall ceremonies commemorate the victims. Every four years, before each summer Olympics, the Israeli delegation holds a ceremony at Yod-Alef Square.

Internationally, however, commemorating the Munich victims was a struggle for the families. In the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games, the Israeli delegation marched in the opening ceremony with 11 black ribbons around the Israeli flag (Galily, 2002). The IOC, however, did not find a way to officially commemorate the victims. Over the years, the Israeli Olympic Committee and local Israeli embassies organized commemoration ceremonies during the Olympic Games in the host cities and invited distinguished guests including IOC Presidents who attended the ceremonies. Despite the demands of the families of the murdered athletes and even pressure from world leaders (Forgrave, 2012), the IOC did not officially commemorate the 1972 Munich victims during the Olympic Games until 2016 (Sinai, 2016; Wilson, 2016).

The Munich Massacre plays an important role internally as part of Israel's national identity and collective history (Galily, 2007; Zerubavel, 2014), and externally as part of Israel's foreign policy fighting terrorism (Diffrient, 2008; Galily, et al., 2012; Naor, 2014). Terrorism is a politically charged concept that has many definitions (Galily, et al, 2012; Giulianoti, & Klausner, 2012; Klein, 2006) and what is considered terrorism

by the Israelis, is often reported in more neutral terms (Gilboa, 2006). Over the past four decades, the 11 Munich victims have been commemorated in Israel in numerous ways such as through annual and quadrennial ceremonies, streets, sports events, stadiums, and monuments (Afek, 2002). All the Munich victims are commemorated by the State of Israel on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem in the monument for The Victims of Acts of Terror. They all have a page in the national memorial site for all the civilian victims of terror attacks. There are several memorial monuments in Israel named after the “Munich 11” in Tel-Aviv, Wingate Institute, Ben-Shemen Forest and Nazrat-Elit. Among the cities that have squares or streets named after the late athletes are Tel-Aviv, Lod, Or-Yehuda, Gadera, Holon, Haifa Kfar-Saba and Bnei-Brak (Data.gov.il, 2017). The football stadium in Ashdod is named after the “Yod Alef” and they are also commemorated in a stadium in Haifa and in an annual youth wrestling tournament (Afek, 2002).

Schools and youth organizations organize events commemorating the Munich victims, Keren Kayemet LeIsrael, the Jewish National Fund has planted trees named after the victims and stamps were also issued to commemorate them (Afek, 2002). The song “September’s Stars” (Kochvey September) by late Israeli prize winner songwriter Ehud Manor was written after the Munich victims. While the Munich victims are often commemorated together, some of them are also commemorated individually. There is an annual race at Wingate Institute named after athletics coach Amitzur Shapirah who was murdered in Munich. Also the athletics stadium at Ohallo College, in the north of Israel, is named after him. There were several national and international competitions named after fencer Andrey Spitzer and in the past there were shooting competitions named after

Kehat Shor. There is a monument in Kiryat Haim to remember weightlifter Zeev Friedman. In southern city of Ashkelon there is a street named after weightlifter David Berger. The weightlifting club Maccabi Romano Herzelia is named after Yossef Romano, a weightlifter that was murdered in the Olympic Village in Munich.

The Commemoration of Munich victims plays a role in the socialization process of Israeli athletes (Afek, 2002; Zerubavel, 2014). Most Israeli athletes train for at least part of their career at Wingate Institute, the main sport institute in Israel, where there is a gym, a museum and several sportive events commemorating the memory of the “Munich Victims.” Every year in September, the NOC of Israel and the local scouts organize a ceremony at the “Yod Alef Square” in Tel-Aviv where all the Olympic family, including present and past athletes come to show respect to the victims (The Olympic Committee of Israel, n.a). Before each Olympic Games the Israeli delegation goes to the square as well and the “Olympic Museum” in Tel-Aviv also commemorates the Munich victims. Therefore, Israeli Olympic athletes are exposed to this legacy and are socialized through that.

When Yael Arad won the first Israeli Olympic medal in the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games, 20 years after the terror attack, she dedicated it to the Munich victims. 12 years later, when Gal Friedman won the first Israeli gold medal in the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, one of the first things he said after the medal ceremony is that when he’ll come back to Israel, he will go to the monument of the Munich victims to show them the gold medal and that he hopes their families are proud of him (Senior, 2004).

The question of the memorial of the Munich victims is arguably one of the most controversial topics the Olympic movement is facing as it directly contradicts the peaceful values of sports (Simri & Polidoro, 2002), and it is part of the most complicated and polarizing ongoing conflicts the world is facing: The terror attack was directed against Israel as part of the Israeli-Arabic dispute, not against the Olympic Movement.

After the massacre in 1972, the competitions stopped for a day, a memorial service was held at the Olympic Stadium in Munich and the Israeli delegation returned to Israel with the 11 coffins (Afek, 2002). During the next four years there were correspondences between the Israeli Olympic Committee and IOC President Lord Killanin, but no solution was made about how to commemorate the victims (Alperovich, 2008). The main commemoration in the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal was done by the Israeli delegation and by the local Jewish community and the local Israeli embassy (Samarach, 1996). In the opening ceremony, Esther Rot Shachamorov carried an Israeli flag with 11 black ribbons attached. The discussion about a commemoration did not continue to the Moscow Olympics as Israel joined the American boycott of the Games (Guttmann, 2002). There were several efforts to commemorate the 1972 events. Every Olympic Games the Israeli delegation respects the victims with a memorial evening. During the Olympic Games in Montreal 1976, Los Angeles 1984, Seoul 1988 and Barcelona 1992, commemoration ceremonies were held by the Israelis and by the local communities (Sagui, 2008; Samarach, 1996), but not by the IOC as part of the Olympic protocol. Since Atlanta 1996, when the Palestine participated for the first time, the

families of the victims demand an official memorial ceremony or an official commemoration in each Olympic Games in the Olympic venues to their loved ones.

While there was no official commemoration of the Munich victims at the Opening Ceremony of the Centennial Games in Atlanta, members of the families were invited to the Olympic Games, and a ceremony was held by the Jewish community, where a commemoration monument was created. During the 1996 Olympic Games, a pipe bomb in the Centennial Olympic Park blew up, killing two people. During the Closing Ceremony of the 1996 Olympic Games, IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch mentioned the 1972 Munich victims, before having a moment of silence, remembering the Israeli athletes and the people who died in the bombing in Atlanta (Morales, 2015).

In the four following summer Olympic Games, Sydney 2000, Athens 2004, Beijing 2008 and London 2012, commemoration ceremonies were held by the Israelis with the support of local authorities, Jewish communities and Israeli embassies, but they were not organized by the IOC or were part of the Olympic protocol for the Olympic Games (Forgrave, 2016; Sagui, 2008). Typically, an official IOC member also attends to pay respect. During the 2008 Olympic Games, Juan Antonio Samaranch, honorary President of the IOC, attended the ceremony along with Israeli IOC member Alex Gilady. In Athens 2004 and London 2012, the acting President, Jacques Rogge, attended the memorial evening. Before the London Olympic Games, a demand for an official commemoration to mark 40 years to the Massacre came not only from Israel but also from key international politicians including Barack Obama and Angela Merkel, however the IOC continued to refuse. Rogge did honor the victims in a ceremony for Olympic

Truce that was held in the Olympic Village, in front of IOC members and other dignitaries (The Associated Press, 2012).

While attending the Israeli ceremonies, the IOC has resisted the call for an official commemoration during opening ceremonies. Over the years, some of the reasons for not having a moment of silence were (Lewis & Shilony, 2012): (a) fearing it will politicize the Games, (b) that there is no place for involving a minute of silence that might spoil the celebration, (c) that this is not the right time, and (d) considerable pressure from 21 Arabic countries threatening boycotts should the IOC given in to demands for a commemoration.

The fact that the massacre took place in West Germany, not far away from Dachau Concentration Camp, had a significant impact on the collective memory of both Jewish and German people. In his autobiography “With Open Eyes” (Zamir & Mass, 2011), Zvi Zamir, the head of the Mossad during the Munich Massacre, recalled the terrible sight of seeing the Israeli athletes moved from the Olympic Village towards the helicopters, emphasizing the significance of a terror attack happening in Germany, recalling the tragedy of the holocaust. Zamir and Mass (2011) wrote, “and we see the Israeli athletes lead, handcuffed and besides them the terrorists, walking rhythmically towards the helicopter. This was a shocking spectacle, especially for a Jew on a German soil, in Munich. I will never forget that” (p. 69).

The 1972 Munich Massacre was traumatic not only for Israel but also for Germany, who tried to host “The Happy Games” and use this competition to show the world a different image than in 1936, when Berlin hosted the Olympics under the Nazi

Regime (Schiller & Young, 2010; Schiller & Young, 2013). After the terror attack, the German Embassy in Washington suggested naming the Olympic Stadium with the name of wrestling coach Moshe Weinberg who was killed in the attack, but the Organizing Committee refused (Schiller & Young, 2010). There are several monuments, signs and exhibitions in Germany commemorating the massacre. Outside the Olympic Stadium in Munich there is a monument with the names of the 11 Israeli athletes and the German policeman that was killed during the attack. In the Olympic Village, at Connollystraße 31, the address where the terror attack took place, there is a sign with the names of the victims. At Fürstenfeldbruck Air Base, where nine of the hostages were murdered, there is a monument and every five years there is a memorial service. There are also references to the Munich Massacre in several museums in Germany and in several Olympic museums around the world, including the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland, where the IOC is located.

The reactions of Israel's sports ministers received national and international media attention since the demand for the commemoration started. In Beijing 2008, Israeli sports minister Raleb Majadele, an Arabic-Israeli minister from the central-left winged Labor Party (HaAvoda), received criticism for not saying in the ceremony that the murder was 35 years ago, when it was 36 (Sagui, 2008). He was also criticized for not mentioning the Munich Massacre in a book about 60 years to Israel's independence (Sofer, 2008) and for arriving late and missing the rising of the Israeli flag at the Olympic Village. Limor Livnat, from the Likud right wing party, was Israel's sports minister during the 2004 Athens Olympic Games and the 2012 London Olympic Games. In

Athens she received criticism for running towards the podium and hugging Gal Friedman right after the medal ceremony when he was awarded Israel's first Olympic Gold medal. In London, Livnat was very critical against the IOC and very aggressive advocating towards the commemoration of the Munich Victims. Livnat made connections between "Black September" to Neo-Nazis and to Iran and stood in a minute of silence on her own during the opening ceremony (Walla! Sport, 2012). In the 2014 ceremony at the Yod Alef Square in Tel-Aviv, right after the Pillar of Defense Operation, Livnat's speech related the Munich Massacre to Hamas, Al Qaeda, ISIS and global terrorism (Sharon, 2014).

Over the years, the story of the Munich victims has been told through different book, films, movies and documentaries (Diffrient, 2008). "One Day in September," an academy award documentary, provoked controversy while showing body parts of the victims. Hollywood movies, such as *Sword of Gideon* from 1986 and Academy Award Nominee "Munich" by Steven Spielberg, from 2005, focused on the "Wrath of God", the revenge by the Israeli government and the Mossad against everyone who was linked to the terror attack in Munich and to "Black September" (Diffrient, 2008; Klein, 2006). Ethical questions were raised about the Mossad Operation and the interpretation by the Israeli government, who was associated with the terror attack in Munich. Two documentaries that came out prior to the Rio 2016 Olympic Games shed light on other angles of the massacre. "Munich 72 and Beyond" (Crisman et al., 2016) also focused on the attempts of the families to commemorate their loved ones, and the rejections they got from the IOC. In the spring of 2016 an unfinished Palestinian documentary named "Munich: A Palestinian Story" caused controversy addressing the terrorists as freedom

fighters (Boker, 2016). The discussion about what is terrorism is also a very political charged issue (Gilboa, 2006; Giulianoti, & Klausner, 2012)

Among these political struggles, on March 2015 (Foxsports, 2015), IOC President Thomas Bach announced that the IOC Executive Board approved that in the Olympic Village in Rio De Janeiro during the 2016 Olympic Games there will be an area to commemorate the 11 victims and there will be a minute of reflection during the Closing Ceremony. On August 3, 2016, two days prior to the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games, the IOC held a commemoration ceremony inside the Olympic Village, a commemoration stone from Ancient Olympia and a commemoration tree signified the commemoration area for athletes who died during the Olympic Games (Wilson, 2016). While the commemoration ceremony was not dedicated only to the 11 Israeli victims, IOC President Thomas Bach, read the names of all the Munich victims, and also of the Georgian athlete who died in a training accident in the Olympic Village, a day before the Opening Ceremony of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver. Having a commemoration monument in the Olympic Village is supposed to become an Olympic tradition in all following Olympic Games, reminding the current athletes in the village what happened to their fellow competitors. In September 2017, a new commemoration monument was also introduced outside the Olympic Stadium in Munich (Aderet, 2017).

Security challenges. Security concerns also played an important role, as several times in the past decades whenever the conflict escalated, Israeli national teams and Israeli clubs had to host their home games abroad (Galily, Tamir & Levy, 2012). For example, in football, Maccabi Haifa had to host the 2003 Champions League campaign in

Cyprus. In December 2012 Israel was supposed to host the European Olympic Committees (EOC) conference in Eilat. However, due to the escalation in Gaza Strip and the “Pillar of Defense” operation, the EOC moved the conference to Rome, much to the disappointment of the Israeli Olympic Committee (Grayson, 2012).

During the eruption of the violence and Operation Protective Edge during the summer of 2014 had severe consequences on Israeli sports. When the violence started, Israel’s Home Front Command posted a restriction limiting a public gathering of no more than 1,000 people in an 80 kilometers radius from Gaza Strip, covering most of the center of Israel and most of the big cities (Dvorin, 2014; The Home Front Command, 2014). From the moment rockets were fired and sirens started, people had between 15 seconds to three minutes to find a shelter or take cover, which of course prevented holding most sports events.

The qualification rounds for football’s Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Champions League and the UEFA Europa League were set to begin in July, before the Israeli national football league started. As Israel was not even hosting local football games in the country and the opening of the league was postponed, UEFA decided that the home games for those competitions will be held outside of the country (Nachmani & Nissim, 2014). A national’s team game against Belgium was postponed (Sheynman, 2014). The scenario of hosting abroad happened before several times, and like in previous cases, the Israeli football teams chose Cyprus (Shorer, 2014) as the venue where to host their home games, mostly because it was the closest destination and relatively affordable.

Without being able to host in their home stadiums, and with very little support from fans abroad, for the first time in six years none of the Israeli clubs that competed in the European football competitions managed to reach the group stages of a European club competition (Burnstein, 2014). In addition to athletic and financial disadvantages, armed conflicts like Operation Protective Edge prevent Israeli communities to brand themselves as international sports cities, thus losing out on exposure and tourism. Tel-Aviv Municipality has a special department trying to brand the city as a global city (Tel-Aviv Startup City, 2016), yet rather than on sports its focus is mostly on innovation and start-up companies. Tel-Aviv has the potential of using the success of its sports clubs to brand itself as an international sports city. Maccabi Tel-Aviv Basketball Club, for example, won its sixth European Championship in 2014 and is considered one of the best teams in European basketball history (Lavie, 2014). There are also very few cities that had two different football clubs in the UEFA Champions League group stage like Maccabi Tel-Aviv F.C. in 2004 and Hapoel Tel-Aviv F.C. in 2010. Yet, during times of war, when teams are hosting abroad and being knocked out early, those branding opportunities are lost.

In terms of staging international sports events, 2013 was a very productive year for Israel, successfully hosting the U21 UEFA European Championship (Dart, 2016) and the Maccabiah Games mostly in Jerusalem (Strum, 2013). New stadiums and sports arenas were built around the country, making Israel attractive for various future international championships. The round of violence with the Hamas changed that.

However, during the fighting, international sport federations had to decide what to do with events that were scheduled to take place in Israel in months to come. Several international sports events scheduled to take place in Israel were postponed or cancelled. Moreover, several Israeli bids to host future sports events were lost.

In summary, due to security concerns, whenever the conflict escalates Israel does not manage to take political advantage of hosting sports events. Instead of having sold-out stadiums, exposing the country to international media, generating revenues from bonuses, and qualifying for international competitions, Israel is forced to host abroad which becomes a financial burden and Israeli teams get knocked out early.

Sports Organizations and the State of Israel

Israeli sport is rooted in the Zionist and in the establishment of the State of Israel (Harif, 2011; Kaufman & Galily, 2009). Since the 1980s, however, the affiliation of Israeli sports associations with political parties and the political influence of the Israeli government on the governance of Israeli sports faded (Kaufman & Galily, 2009). According to Kaufman and Galily (2009), “the social, economic and political changes the country has undergone in the past 40 years have caused sports to lose their function as a political tool and as a tool for spreading propaganda” (p. 1025). According to the Israeli Sport Law (Nevo, 2018a), an association or a federation as non-profit organizations for sports, as the center and the representative of the discipline in Israel and that is recognized by the international organizations that are known in that sports discipline. The Sport Law also regulates the responsibilities and duties of sports associations and federations in Israel and defines their mandates. Sports associations and federations are

defined as public authorities by the Freedom of Information Law (Nevo, 2018c), and receive public funding according to The Regulation in Gambling in Sport Law (Nevo, 2018c). Thus, sports associations and federations are officially recognized by the State of Israel, funded by the State of Israel, and mandated not only to organize sports activities in Israel, but also to represent Israeli sports internationally. Thus, while sports associations and federations are not part of the Israeli government, they are officially mandated by the State of Israel.

On the other hand, international sports associations warn from political interferences, and even have sanctions in their regulations that might even result with exclusions or expulsions (FIFA, 2011; International Olympic Committee, 2015). NOCIL, for example, states that while welcoming collaboration with the state, protecting its independence is a top priority (Olympicsil, 2018). The definitions of what is a governmental political interference are very broad and open to interpretation. As a result, sports associations in Israel are in a very sensitive position, being regulated by the State of Israel, financially depended on the State of Israel, mandated by the State of Israel to represent Israeli sports internationally, but needing to comply with international regulations about lack of political interference in their activities.

Maccabi World Union. The Maccabi movement started in 1895, with Jewish sports clubs being established in Europe. Maccabi World Union (MWU) was formed in 1921 as the umbrella organization of all the Maccabi branches worldwide (Maccabi World Union, 2017). As of 2017, Maccabi World Union operates in over 50 countries and six continents, with national, regional and even continental Maccabiah Games

including the European Maccabiah Games and the Pan-American Maccabiah Games, taking place before or after the main world Maccabiah Games in Israel. The headquarters of MWU is located in the Maccabiah Village in Ramat Gan, Israel. According to its mission statement,

MWU is a Zionist organization that utilizes sports as a means to bring Jewish people of all ages closer to Judaism and Israel in addition to various informal educational activities in a manner that surpasses politics and sectarianism. Many Maccabi clubs serve as community centers and youth movements providing a diversity of educational, cultural, social and sports activities under one roof. (Maccabi World Union, 2017)

The main partners of MWU are different Jewish organizations (Maccabi, 2017) such as the Jewish Agency for Israel, Jewish Community Centers Associations of North America, World Confederations of Jewish Community Centers, Jewish National Fund, World Zionist Organization, and the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. MWU is also funded by private sponsors such as Nike, different companies in Israel and the Jewish Life Television (JLTV). The Maccabiah Games are also funded by fees paid by participants and by the Israeli government. Although MWU is a global movement that is not under the responsibilities of one Israeli governmental ministries, MWU collaborates with various ministries and agencies promoting Zionism and connecting Jewish communities to the State of Israel through sports.

Sports associations and federations in Israel. After World War I, Maccabi World Union (MWU), an umbrella institution for the national sports and territorial Maccabi affiliated clubs, was formed in the twelfth Zionist Congress in 1921. Known as Palestine, the territory was under Ottoman governance until 1920 and under British governance until the end of the British Mandate and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. More organizations were established in Eretz Israel, including sports associations, and sport centers (Kaufman, 2007) such as Maccabi which saw itself as a national movement (Harif, 2011), Beitar which represented the Revisionist right winged leadership, Elitzur which represented the more religious stream in the Zionist leadership and Hapoel that represented the socialist workers, all having their own sports clubs, representing different political affiliations with Jewish leaderships in Palestine.

When Jewish communities immigrated to Palestine in the early twentieth century, they established sports centers, such as Maccabi, Beitar, Elitzur and Hapoel (Kaufman, & Galily, 2009). The centers had political affiliation with different parties in the Jewish leadership (Kaufman, 2007). They were led mostly by Maccabi, and established the organized sports associations and federations (Harif, 2007), including the NOC of Palestine that represented the Jewish community in British-Governed Palestine and was recognized by the IOC in 1934 (Alperovich, 2007). Although the sports centers were established with affiliations to political parties and ideologies, over the years these affiliations diminished.

As of 2017, most sports clubs are registered with a sports center in order to be registered in an association and a league. The sports centers are publicly funded

according to the annual budget of the Sport and Culture Ministry, through the TOTO, Israeli Sports Betting Board, through private sponsors and through membership fees by the affiliated clubs of each center. The sports centers are represented in the sports associations, in the NOC of Israel and in the National Sports Council of Israel.

The sports associations in Israel regulate the rules and regulations, the leagues, the national teams, grassroots levels, officiating, disciplinary committees and women sports (The Israel Football Association, 2017). The chairmen of the sports associations appoint the coaches of the national teams and they select the squads that represent Israel internationally. The bigger associations such as the Israeli Football Association and the Israeli Basketball Association, have League Managements that are in charge of regulations of the top professional leagues. The sports associations are funded through budget allocations determined by the Israeli Sports Council, TOTO, Sport Centers, private sponsors, as well as registrations fees, TV rights, ticket sales. and merchandise sales.

The sports associations are independent from the Israeli government, however, much of their annual budget relies on public funds coming from the TOTO and approved by the Israeli Sports Council and the Israeli Sports Administration. Over the years, there have been various clashes between the Israeli government and different sports associations over budgets and policies. The sports associations are represented in NOCIL and in the Israeli Sports Council.

National Olympic Committee of Israel. The National Olympic Committee of Israel (NOCIL) is the umbrella organization for Israeli sports associations and federations

and sports centers, operating under the Olympic Charter (The Olympic Committee of Israel, 2017). It includes representatives from sports associations, sports centers and public figures. NOCIL was established in 1951, and Israel has been participating in the Olympic Games since the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki. NOCIL is the responsible body sending the Israeli delegation to the Olympic Games. The delegation is determined by the professional unit of NOCIL, The Elite Sport Department. NOCIL is a member of European Olympic Committees (EOC) and the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC). NOCIL is also responsible for distributing grants for outstanding achievements of top Olympic athletes. Except of sending a delegation to the Olympic Games, NOCIL is responsible to promote the Olympic ideal in Israel, commemorating the 11 Munich victims in Israel and abroad and is collaborating with different governmental ministries, local authorities and national and international sports organizations.

NOCIL is independent from the Israeli government, the Israeli Sports Administration and the Ministry of Culture and Sports. There are several places where there is collaboration between these entities though. Wingate Institute is the national sports institute of Israel which is also publicly funded by the Israeli government and its facilities are used by the Elite Sports Unit, which is under NOCIL. The National Sports Council of Israel is the place where NOCIL and the Sports Administration officially meet to discuss long term policies. Furthermore, while NOCIL is financially independent from the Israeli government, in Olympic years, the Sports Ministry does allocate special funds for the preparations of the athletes. Moreover, several Olympic athletes have been

participating in programs that are funded by the Israeli Sports Ministry and the Sports Administrations. Thus, although NOCIL is independent from the government, there are collaborations between the two most important entities of Israeli sports. The NOCIL states on its website that the organization complies with international associations to keep its independence from the state (Olympicsil, 2018):

The state has an important role in building infrastructure, allocating finances and proper legislation. Cooperation with the government is most welcome, but it must be remembered and emphasized that Olympic sports are autonomous and the role of the Olympic Committee is to maintain this independence as a top priority. (Olympicsil, 2018)

The National Paralympic Committee of Israel. The National Paralympic Committee of Israel, together with the Israeli Sports Association for the Disabled (ISAD), are the umbrella organizations for sports for people with disabilities in Israel. The National Paralympic Committee of Israel operates under the charter of the International Paralympic Committee that was given to ISAD in 1989 (ISAD, 2018). Israel has been one of the pioneers in using sports for rehabilitation (Brittain, & Hultzler, 2009). The founder of the Paralympic Movement was the German-Jewish Dr. Ludwig Guttmann who fled the Nazis and treated war veterans in Great Britain through athletic competitions at the Stock-Mandeville Hospital after World War II. The competitions were formalized into the Stock-Mandeville Games and in 1960 the first Paralympic Games were held in Rome, Italy (Gold & Gold, 2007).

Israel has been very involved with the Paralympic Movement since the early days of the country and the early days of the movement. The Jewish connection between Dr. Guttmann and the State of Israel, the need to find solutions to treat polio and to treat war veterans, and the fact only few countries took part in these games, made Israel a pioneer and an innovator in the movement. Israel even hosted the third Paralympic Games in 1968 in Tel-Aviv (Brittain, & Hultzler, 2009), where the country finished third in the medal table (Paralympic, 2018). As more countries joined the Paralympic Movement, more countries became independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the movement became more professional, with the focus shifting from rehabilitation to high performance, the importance and the performance of Israel in the Paralympic Games and the Paralympic Movement has declined. However, because of the importance of sports for rehabilitation of wounded soldiers, there are formal relations between The National Paralympic Committee of Israel, and the Israeli Sports Association for the Disabled, with different organizations affiliated with the Israeli Defense Force, and the Ministry of Defense and funded by different governmental offices in Israel (Brittain, & Hultzler, 2009).

Governmental ministries. There are several ministries that shape sports in Israel (Gov.il, 2017). The Ministry of Education is responsible for sports in the education system. The Finance Ministry has impact on the annual budget and the funds that eventually will be allocated towards sports. The Tourism Ministry collaborates with sports authorities when hosting sport events, the Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for citizenship applications which at times are relevant to sports and the

Defense Ministry has impact on securing Israeli delegations that compete abroad and on sports in Israel during escalations of the conflict. However, the Ministry that oversees sports in Israel and is responsible for sports in Israel is the Ministry of Culture and Sport.

The most important governmental agency that regulates sports and recreation in Israel is the Sports Administration (Ministry of Culture and Sport, 2017). Over the years, the Sports Administration has been under different governmental ministries. As of 2017, the sports administration is under the governance of the Sports and Culture Ministry. According to the Ministry of Culture and Sport, the Sport Administration is involved with policy making, legislation, transferring funds and consulting in the following spheres:

Competitive sports, popular sports, advancing women in sports, promoting the building and upgrading of sports facilities, developing competitive driving (through the Motor Sport Authority), developing and promoting recreational diving, formulating rules of sports ethics, preventing violence in sports, and supervising the training of sports coaches and instructors.

(Ministry of Culture and Sport, 2017)

The Sports Administration is also involved with local authorities, supervising ministry policies and representing the Israeli government abroad in forums, councils, international organizations and promoting collaborations with other countries (Ministry of Culture and Sport, 2017). The Sports Administration is funded by the Israeli government, according to the annual budget approved by the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. The Sports Administration is also involved with local authorities, supervising ministry policies and representing the Israeli government abroad in forums, councils,

international organizations and promoting collaborations with other countries (Ministry of Culture and Sport, 2017). The Sports Administration is funded by the Israeli government, according to the annual budget approved by the Israeli parliament, the Knesset.

The National Sports Council of Israel was formed in 2014 to provide a holistic strategic plan for sports organization in Israel (Gov.il, 2017). The council is under the Israeli Sport Administration, and includes members of the NOCIL, the sports centers, members of sports associations, members of the Gambling Agency and members of the public. The responsibilities of the council are to provide counseling to the Sports Minister on long term strategy and on priorities in funding, to provide criteria which sports clubs, sports centers and sports associations to fund and how much, to fight racism and violence in sports, to determine the national facilities plans and to determine funding priorities of different national projects.

Theoretical Framework

Public diplomacy. Traditional definitions of public diplomacy refer to the communications and interactions by governments, policymakers, organizations and individuals to influence foreign publics to achieve a more favorable image of the nation and ultimately achieve foreign policy goals (Cull, 2008; Gilboa, 2006; Nye, 2008). Signitzer and Coombs (1992) differentiate between traditional diplomacy that refers to the national governments trying to influence each other through negotiations, to public diplomacy that is aimed at foreign publics and refers to how governments, organizations and individuals shaping public opinions, and through them their governments foreign

policies. The term public diplomacy is relatively new, applied first in the 1960s to research as an emerging dimension in international relations about “the conduct of foreign policy through engagement with international publics” (Cull, 2010, p.11). The term was first applied in 1965 by Edmund Gullion a former US Ambassador and the Dean of the Fletcher School of Diplomacy at Tufts University, in Medford Massachusetts (Cull, 2010). The term referred “to the process by which international actors seek to accomplish the goals of their foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics and has gained international currency only since the end of the Cold War” (Cull, 2008, p. 31). Gilboa (2006) also refers to the Cold War as the origin of public diplomacy arguing that because of the emergence of nuclear weapons “information and persuasion campaigns would be the principal weapons that the two superpowers, the US and Soviet Union, would utilize in their global ideological and strategic struggle” (Gilboa, 2006, p. 717). According to Gilboa (2006) public diplomacy is used by policymakers to communicate with foreign people and influence them and their governments. In most cases, the goals of public diplomacy are to achieve a better social, political and economic image of the nation (Gilboa, 2006). Nye (2008) adds that when the term public diplomacy was introduced in the 1960s it was defined as “interactions not only with foreign governments but primarily with nongovernmental individuals and organizations, and often presenting a variety of private views in addition to governmental views” (Nye, 2008, p. 101).

Public diplomacy has been associated with propaganda (Cull, 2010; Nye, 2010) as they both focus on influence. However, unlike propaganda, where the message goes through a one-way street between the government and the audience, public diplomacy

when done right is a two-way street, an ongoing process with a mutual influence. Wang (2006a) suggests that public diplomacy encompasses three main dimensions: (a) “Promoting nation states’ goals and policies,” (b) “communicating their values,” and (c) “developing common understanding and mutual trust among countries and peoples” (p. 43).

The focus on message, target and audiences make public diplomacy multidisciplinary (Fitzpatrick, 2007). Although the term comes from international relations through the context of analyzing the Cold War, as strategic communications (Nye, 2008) is an essential part of it, public diplomacy it has also been very much studied in the fields of communications and public relations (Fitzpatrick, 2007; White, 2017). While more traditional definitions of public diplomacy refer to the engagement of government-to-government or government-to-people (Wang, 2006a), more recent definitions also emphasize non-state actors and even the private sector (White, 2015), looking at corporate diplomacy.

While the term public diplomacy might be relatively new, the parts that constituent it are much older and were used for foreign policy before the term was coined (Cull, 2008). Nye (2008) goes back to the nineteenth century, and to the French-Prussia War in 1883, and how the French government needed to repair the French image. Similar arguments were made about Italy and Germany after World War I. Cull (2008) divided the practices of public diplomacy into five: advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy and international broadcasting. According to Gilboa (2006) some of the techniques used in public diplomacy are: “International broadcasting; cultural and

scientific exchanges of students, scholars, intellectuals and artists; participation in festivals and exhibitions; building and maintaining cultural centers; teaching a language; establishing local friendship leagues and trade associations.” (Gilboa, 2006, p. 717).

Cull (2010) offers seven lessons from public diplomacy. The first lesson is that public diplomacy begins with listening (Cull, 2010). This means constantly collecting data and analyzing opinions of foreign publics, before sending messages. The second lesson is that public diplomacy must be connected to policy. This means that public diplomacy is not a substitute for a good policy, and what is being done is more important than what is being said. The third lesson is that public diplomacy is not a performance for domestic consumption. Cull (2010) refers to a problem caused by government who instead of targeting foreign audiences in their overseas public diplomacy, try to show their own people that they are making an attempts to educate foreign audiences about misperceptions regarding the country.

According to Cull (2010), credibility is one of the most important criterions for having affective public diplomacy. The fourth lesson is that public diplomacy requires credibility but that has implications and his fifth lesson is that sometimes the most credible voice is not one’s own. In the age of available information, having a credible message is a key component in public diplomacy. He also argued that in order to look credible, at times a state needs to step back and let someone else deliver the message.

The sixth lesson according to Cull (2010) is that public diplomacy is not always about the government. This means that effective public diplomacy does not have to be directly connected to advancing foreign policy to improve the image of the country, but

could also be about global goals and general improvement of the international environment. Cull's (2010) seventh and final lesson is that public diplomacy is everyone's business. By that he refers to "the contribution of 'citizen diplomats' and the 'people to people' public diplomacy" (Cull, 2010, p. 15), arguing that citizens play an important role in delivering a message that diplomats seek to project. With the growing technology, and the constant engagement of on cyberspace, opinions are not built only on government-sponsored messages but also based on engagement and direct experiences with individuals.

Nation branding. The research of nation branding comes especially from business studies perspectives that focus on management, marketing and sponsorship (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993; Olins, 2002). According to Aaker (1991) a brand is the name or symbols that identifies one group and differentiate it from its competitions. According to Keller (1993), brand equity is defined in terms of marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand, the assets and liabilities that are associated with the brand. Fan's (2010) definition of a nation brand is "the total sum of all perceptions of a nation in the minds of international stakeholders, which may contain some of the following elements: people, place, culture/language history, food, fashion, famous faces (celebrities), global brands and so on" (Fan, 2010, p. 98). While branding is the process done by the government or the country itself, the image and the reputation of the country are determined by their target audiences, which in the case of nation branding are foreign people and foreign governments (Fan, 2010).

According to Olins (2002), branding a nation is not different from branding a product. Olins (2002) uses the example of a revolution, arguing that every time a revolution was made, the new regime changed the flags, the symbols, and with that created new values, a new ethos and a new image that is different from the old one. The field contextualizes traditional branding and marketing theories and approaches such as brand equity (Keller, 1993) to states, countries, cities and regions, trying to maximize their capabilities. Branding a nation is commonly analyzed through two main approaches: (a) the products associated with the place (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 1993; Johansson, 1989), and (b) the place as a tourism destination (Kang & Perdue, 1994; Nadeau et al., 2008).

A destination-oriented branding focuses on a country as a tourism destination, trying to have an attractive image for future tourists (Nadeau et al., 2008). This approach to nation branding received several names such as marketing places (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993), tourism destination image (Nadeau et al., 2008), or various variations of country brand, city brand or place branding (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). Some of the categories that are commonly analyzed in tourism based research are: the attractions, the scenery, the culture, the nature, the history, the reputation of the people and the country, the economic and political systems and others (Nadeau et al., 2008; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002).

While tourism-based research focus on the country's attempts to attract future tourists, the product-based approach targets future consumers of products and businesses associated with a country (Nadeau et al., 2008). Product-based branding in nation branding literature receives various names such as product-country image (Nadeau et al.,

2008), Country-of-Origin (Dinnie, 2003) or various variations with the words “Made in” (Johansson, 2007; Nebenzahl, Jaffe, & Lampert, 1997). The “Made in” label (Johansson, 2007) embodies various characteristics and values that may influence the consumers decision whether to purchase a product associated with the country. Nebenzahl, Jaffe and Lampert (1997) add that the ways countries are branded and the images they have in the eyes of the consumers are important in every stage of the process: From the home country (HC) where the consumer resides, the origin country (OC) of the consumer, the made-in country (MC) of the product where and the product was made, and the designed-in country (DC) where the product is designed. Some of the factors that impact product-based branding are nationalism, the economic system, the people and country’s competencies, culture, nationalism, education, and demographics.

Another factor that might influence a consumer to either travel to a country or buy products from a certain country is animosity (Batra et al., 2000; Klein, Ettenson & Morris, 2008; Laroche et al., 2003). War is a factor that creates animosity (Klein, Ettenson & Morris, 2008) between people from the fighting countries. Moreover, an international crisis raises negative feelings towards a country's products (Heslop, Lu & Cray, 2008). Thus, improving an image of a nation that is going through war or a conflict is much more complex.

There are inconsistencies in academic literature about the definitions and goals of nation branding. Fan (2010) pointed out five different definitions of the purpose and outcomes of nation branding in academic literature: (a) to remold national identities; (b) to enhance a nation’s competitiveness; (c) to embrace political, cultural, business and

sport activities; (d) to promote economic and political interests at home and abroad; and (5) to alter, improve or enhance a nation's image/reputation. Fan (2010) outlined different research fields that are part of nation branding research: (a) export branding, (b) destination/place branding, (c) public diplomacy/ political branding and (d) national identity and cultural branding. Thus, while there is a general agreement that nation branding is an attempt by governments and other non-state actors to achieve a better image of the country, there are various definitions to the term and to what exactly it captures, especially with the relations with public diplomacy and national identity. The terms place branding, nation branding, and country branding are at times used interchangeably and at times nation branding refers to the entire branding of a country while place branding refers mostly to the tourism side of branding a specific place or destination (Avraham, 2009; Henna, & Rowley, 2007; Jun et al., 2009). In this study I use the terms nation branding and place branding interchangeably.

National identity. According to social identity theory, the self-concept of an individual is influenced by one's membership in a social group (David & Bar-Tal, 2009). Membership in a social group embodies emotions, values, knowledge, norms, behaviors and self-categorization. According to David and Bar-Tal (2009), the process of social identity goes through two processes: (a) a cognitive process of categorizing one-self into groups and defining the meanings of these groups and of external groups, and (b) a motivational to differentiate between one's groups to external groups. According to social identity theory, social identity has impact on various social effects, including collective feelings or behaviors such as discrimination, collaborations and the possibility of

mobilizing people to act together under a shared social reality (David & Bar-Tal, 2009). Collective identity is the acknowledgement of individuals that they share the same social identity.

National identity is a specific case of collective identity, based on nationalism. According to David and Bar-Tal (2009), national identity embodies a shared history, values, ideology, identity, territory, common myths and memories, public culture, common duties, commonalities, beliefs and other socially constructed collective characteristics. Social identity theory and the term national identity come from the research fields of sociology and psychology (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; David & Bar-Tal, 2009).

Comparing Nation Branding, Public Diplomacy, and National Identity

The terms nation branding, public diplomacy and national identity have some overlaps, but are inherently different. The term public diplomacy originated during the Cold War and comes from the fields of political science and public relations (Cull, 2008; Nye, 2008). The term nation branding is directly connected to business management and marketing, analyzing images and brands (Anholt, 2010; Fan, 2010), and researching destinations (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993). National identity comes from the fields of sociology and psychology, or sociopsychology (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; David & Bar-Tal, 2009), and is rooted in social identity theory (David & Bar-Tal, 2009).

One important commonality between public diplomacy, nation branding and national identity, is that they all impact countries' images and reputations (Anholt, 2010; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015). Research on country image goes back to the 1970s, when

Nagashima (1970) analyzed attitudes towards foreign products. According to Nagashima (1970),

the “made in” image is the picture, the reputation, the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products of a specific country. This image is created by such variables as representative products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history, and tradition.

(p. 68)

An extended definition will be looking at more target groups such as tourists, residents, investors, and work power and export markets. These components of analysis apply also to nation branding, public diplomacy and national identity (Anholt, 2010; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015).

Country image is an outcome of nation branding and public diplomacy. Research on country image is multidisciplinary, influenced by various fields especially from business management and social sciences (Anholt, 2010). In scholarly work, country image is closely related to as nation branding, focusing on the attributes of a product associated with a certain place or country (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 1993) and analyzing the image of a country as a tourism destination (Kang & Perdue, 1994; Nadeau et al., 2008). The field applies traditional branding and marketing theories and approaches, such as brand equity (Keller, 1993), to states, countries, cities, and regions, trying to maximize their capabilities. From political science perspectives, public diplomacy is used to influence foreign audiences through having a certain image of the country that eventually will influence foreign policies (Cull 2012; Nye, 2004). In sociology and psychology,

country image relates to social identity, national identity and a nation's identity and how members of a nation perceive themselves, perceive members of other nations and perceive the nation (Anholt, 2010; David & Bar-Tal, 2009; Fan, 2010). So while the three terms come from different research fields, they are all important to understand the construction of a country's image.

Other commonalities between the different terms are the defining values that constitute public diplomacy, nation branding and national identity. Values such as culture, history, political and economic systems, are all important for public diplomacy, nation branding and national identity individually and also collectively when creating a country's image. Culture for example is a very important component in all three terms. Signitzer and Coombs (1992) argue that cultural diplomacy impacts public diplomacy and serves foreign policy. Nye (2004) argued that popular culture and high culture are essential for soft power, which is part of public diplomacy. Culture is also important in enhancing nation brands (Anholt, 2005). According to Szondi (2010), "nation brand values are often rooted in and reflect national values, which can be interpreted in different ways by different cultures" (p. 337).

Public diplomacy, nation branding and national identity also have to be rooted in reality to be credible and have value. This means that marketing managers cannot make claims that are doubtful or can be easily refuted. A good public diplomacy must be based on a good practiced policy (Cull, 2010). Successful nation branding must be based on the real attributes of a country and not just something that a public relations agency came up

with (Nye, 2008). For a group of people to have a collective identity and of course a national identity, true commonalities and shared values must exist.

However, whereas public diplomacy, nation branding, and national identity might be constructed by similar values and attributes and are all rooted in reality, there is a significant difference between them when it comes to the people and organizations that construct them and shape them (Anholt, 2010; Fan 2010). Nation branding and public diplomacy target foreign audiences, while national identity is shaped by the members of the individuals who share the collective identity and members of other groups who differentiate themselves. Nation branding is done by the government and non-state actors, while public diplomacy is done by the government, non-governmental organizations and the people but eventually is tied to foreign policy. National identity is not necessarily shaped by the state, but holidays, memorial days and other governmental constructed events and traditions influence the shared bond. Public diplomacy targets foreign audiences with the goal of eventually serving foreign policy. Nation branding targets both individuals and governments, and is not directly oriented towards foreign policy.

The terms public diplomacy and nation branding have much in common, but also differ. In academic literature, there are inconsistencies regarding the terms and various the definitions of them and what exactly each one embodies and how they relate to each other (Fan, 2010). Fan (2010) pointed out different definitions and according to him nation branding is an over-arching term that embodies the functions of public diplomacy and national identity. According to Fan (2010), the branding of a nation is influenced by public diplomacy, national identity, destination branding and export branding. In this

study, I take the traditional definitions of public diplomacy that define the term as related to governmental policies (Cull, 2010; Gilboa, 2008), while when addressing nation branding, I use the definitions that look at product country (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993), and tourism destination image (Nadeau et al., 2008; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002) that are not necessarily depended on governmental policies.

International Relations, Public Diplomacy, and Soft Power

Two of the most influential approaches in international relations theory were neorealism and neoliberalism (Powell, 1994). These two theories differ significantly in the way they perceive power and gains, the importance of anarchy, international structure and the role of the state and non-governmental institutions. The neorealist approach is a structural approach looking at the state as the unit of analysis and on the international system as anarchy. It is a pragmatic approach, rational, looking at survival and self interest as the main goals of states, where war is state of nature (Keohane, 1986). According to realism, survival is the key goal of the state, thus military force and foreign policy are the most important factors and should not be jeopardized.

Legro and Moravcsik (1999) argued that as a theoretical paradigm realism has three core assumptions. The first assumption is about the nature of the actors which is rational and unitary political. That conflict groups exist and they act in a rational way in an anarchic setting. They also emphasize the importance of anarchy in the realist paradigm, where there is no world government or no one sovereign power. They also point out that the unitary actor, which is now the state, can be replaced in other historical contexts by City-States, tribes, regional political unions or other conflict groups that

enjoy legitimacy of using force within territorial jurisdictions (Lergo & Moravcesik, 1999). The second assumption addresses the nature of the state preferences which is fixed and uniformly conflictual goals (Lergo & Moravcesik, 1999). Neorealism seeks preservation at minimum and at maximum drive for universal domination (Powell, 1994). They argue that this statement is vague and that in a plus-sum world tradition realism would not emerge. They do generally agree with the assumption of seeing the world as a constant competition, as it does not restrict positive-sum conflicts in a zero-sum world. The third assumption about realism addresses international structure having primary material capabilities. Unlike the first two assumptions that focus on the state, the third one focuses on the international structure. The material capabilities constitute a fundamental reality that have influence on the way states behave (Lergo, & Moravcesik, 1999).

Liberalism differs from realism significantly (Keohane & Martin, 1995). Liberalism does not see the world as a zero-sum game, there is much more emphasis on international institutions and non-governmental institutions, much more emphasis on collaboration and more weight is given to different pressure groups within the states. It also puts more emphasis on trading relations, rather than military force and foreign policy than realism.

Although in different ways, through both realism and liberalism, public diplomacy plays an important role through foreign diplomatic influences. In realism foreign policy is a key factor in survival and maintaining national security and in liberalism collaboration and influencing pressure groups are essential parts of the

theories. There are various definitions of power, but the commonality between them is the ability of an actor to influence the acts of others (Nye, 2011), and public diplomacy is a tool governments use to influence other actors (Cull, 2008). While realism looks at military force as the most important source of power, Nye (2004) suggests another source, coining the term soft power (Nye, 2004) as a non-military way to achieve goals in world politics. According to Nye (2008), “power in a global information age, more than ever, will include a soft dimension of attraction as well as the hard dimensions of coercion and inducement” (p. 107). Soft power has limitations, as it does not embody the ability to command and control. Combining the hard power as to command and enforce and soft power as an attraction is what is Nye (2008) referred to as smart power, the most effective use of power in international relations, especially when dealing with terrorism that embody both violence and ideology.

From soft power to sports diplomacy. In his book *Soft Power: The means to success in world politics*, Nye (2004) demonstrated how the United States has been using different sources of power to influence other countries and players. According to Nye (2004) power is the capability to affect others, to create outcomes and relationships are involved. In international relations, Nye (2004) described hard power as military and economic capabilities, as these are the main tools that can pose threats or incentives. Nye (2004) suggests other forms of power in world politics to attract players and influence agendas, rather than just military force or economic sanctions.

Soft power does not rely on military force or on sanctions, but on the possibility to shape the preferences of others through attractions and seductions. Nye (2004; 2008)

argued that the sources of soft power are culture, political values and foreign policy. According to Nye (2008), the sources of credibility of soft power are governments, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, media and markets and the receivers of soft power are foreign governments and foreign publics. According to Nye (2004), “when a country’s culture includes universal values and its policies promote values and interests that others share, it increases the probability of obtaining its desired outcomes because of the relationship of attraction and duty that it creates” (p. 11).

Thus, culture, either high culture or popular culture (Nye, 2004), plays a role in public diplomacy. According to Signitzer and Coombs (1992), “cultural diplomacy’s goal is to convey a favorable image of one’s culture with a view forward facilitating diplomatic activities as whole” (p. 142). Signitzer and Coombs (1992) separated cultural diplomacy into two stages: creating cultural agreements and executing them. They argue that cultural diplomacy and cultural cooperation influence cultural communications, which influences a state’s public diplomacy. According to Anholt (2005), culture also enriches a nation’s brand, rooting the brand in culture and history.

Meaning and values are not universal and vary between cultures (Szondi, 2010). According to Nye (2004), using culture for soft power purposes will be more effective between countries that share similar values. According to Nye (2004) this is a limitation of soft power when the cultures are not similar, using culture for soft power will most likely achieve a lesser outcome than when the cultures are similar. Nye (2004) argued that the use of culture for public diplomacy is contextual, and American films that can showcase an attractive United States in China and South America, can have the opposite

effect in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. He argued, “the background attraction (and repulsion) of American popular culture in different regions and among different groups may make it easier or more difficult for Americans to promote their policies” (p. 12). The limitations of America’s soft power and cultural diplomacy are especially evident when addressing the Arabic and Muslim world that does not have a democratic culture (Nye, 2004; Wang, 2006b).

The declining of the United States’ reputation is discussed in the book *Rebuilding Brand America* (Martin, 2007). Martin (2007) argued that products that were “Made in America” such as McDonald, Coca Cola, and Levi’s, were not only respected, but gave a bits of American experiences to people all over the world and helped associating America with money, freedom and pursuit of happiness. However, the strength of brand America also caused a polarizing affect, associating Americans with arrogance, self-absorption and ignorance. Martin (2007) also raises the importance of public opinion research on Brand America, and the connection between public relations and public diplomacy (Wang, 2006a).

When assessing the United States cultural engagement with different countries, Nye (2004) argued that when comparing with the Soviet Union, popular culture is very different but both countries are interested in sports, and in winning the most medals in the Olympic Games. “In science and technology, classical music, ballet, and athletics, Soviet culture was attractive, but the absence of popular culture exports limited its impact” (Nye, 2004, 75). Szondi (2010) makes a connection between the roles of sports and culture in the contexts of nation branding and public diplomacy, arguing that

governments lobbying to host “cultural or sports events also come under the auspices of PR where relationships are developed with key decision makers” (Szondi, 2010, p. 340).

Culture and Sports Diplomacy

In the context of sports, one of the most efficient platforms to use soft power and cultural diplomacy is through the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games (Arning, 2013). Over 200 National Olympic Committees participate in the Olympic Games that are broadcasted to 220 countries and territories around the world drawing an audience of around 4 billion viewers (Arning, 2013). The Opening Ceremony gives the hosting countries an opportunity to showcase their culture and history and leave a lasting memory. Arning (2013) studied all Opening Ceremonies of the summer Olympic Games between 1980 and 2012. During that period of time, the countries that hosted the summer Olympic Games were the Soviet Union (Moscow 1980), the United States (Los Angeles 1984, Atlanta 1996), South Korea (Seoul 1988), Spain (Barcelona 1992), Australia (Sydney 2000), Greece (Athens 2004), China (2008) and Great Britain (2012). He breaks down his analysis into six categories: (a) mass orchestration, (b) technological prowess, (c) symbolic ingenuity, (d) aesthetic enchantment, (e) whimsy and humor, and (f) musical grandeur.

When discussing mass orchestration, Arning (2013) focused mostly on the amount of people participating in the parades during the opening ceremonies in Moscow, Beijing and Seoul. He particularly emphasized the Soviet use of military in the opening ceremony, combined with the cultural capital of the Bolshoi ballet. For technological prowess, some of the examples Arning gives were the Soviet Union showing a message

from a cosmonaut in space, of the United States landing a jet in the Olympic Stadium in Los Angeles and the South Koreans forming the Olympic Rings by a coordinated parachute team. In symbolic ingenuity, Arning (2013) analyzed the symbols that were used. He gives examples of the shapes the different performances create, such as English and Korean alphabet in Seoul, or creating a human pyramid in Barcelona, that had some symbols that represented the 12 European Union countries, but also some that represented Catalan folklore. For aesthetic enchantment, Arning (2013) gives examples of the use of colorful performances to reference historic events and local cultures and communities, such as the indigenous flowers in Sydney or imperial designs and cherry blossoms in Beijing. Whimsy was defined as a playful creation, and examples included the mascots that were used during the ceremonies. The last category Arning (2013) analyzed was music, which he describes as one of the most powerful media tools. Some of the examples include the massive dance performances, the different dance routines while using iconic and symbolic signs. According to Arning (2013), “opening ceremonies enable countries to smuggle in and project soft power through the guise of Olympic stewardship” (p. 539).

Countries, cities and communities have been using sports events for public diplomacy (Arning 2013; Jackson 2013) and branding purposes (Chalip & Costa, 2005; Preuss, 2015) to achieve social, political and financial goals and leverage future opportunities (Chalip, 2006) and improve the image of the country. By hosting sports events and participating in sports events, countries receive international exposure not only on the competitions but on the culture and values of the country, making sports

useful tool for countries to demonstrate their soft power (Arning 2013; Nye, 2004) to achieve international goals and improve their public diplomacy (Cull, 2009). Sports diplomacy is one example of how soft power can be used for diplomatic purposes to achieve foreign policy goals (Arning, 2013; Murray, & Pigman, 2014).

According to Murray and Pigman (2014), “international sport is used as an instrument of diplomacy by governments can generate important prescriptive conclusions that can enable governments to use sport for diplomatic purposes more effectively” (p. 1115). The connection between sports and diplomacy goes back over 2,700 years ago, to the Ancient Olympia and the “Ekecheiria”, the “Olympic Truce” that was respected by the different Greek City-States (Does, 2014). In the last century, sports played a diplomatic role by promoting collaboration such as “Ping Pong Diplomacy” (Carter & Sugden, 2011), a table tennis game that led to official relations between the United States and communist People’s Republic of China, a joint host of the 2002 World Cup by Japan and South Korea. However, sports also became a platform for political boycotts such as between the Olympic boycotts of the United States and the Soviet Union during the 1980s (Murray, 2012; Murray, & Pigman, 2014) and political exclusions, like in the case of South Africa, which was excluded from the Olympic movement while it was under the Apartheid Regime (McLean, 2014).

Sport events have become a political tool for countries and governments to promote themselves, leverage political, and economic goals, regenerate, expose local products, local businesses the local culture, promote tourism and thus improve their international image (Chalip & Leyns, 2002; Heslop, et al., 2010; Laroche et al., 2003;

Nadeau, et al., 2008). The unit of analysis may vary from a country or a nation, to a global city, a region, or even a small town (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). Country image may change in time, although the process is rather slow. Preuss (2008) differentiates between different types of sport events according to the number of sports (multi sports events such as the Olympic Games, and single sport like the Super Bowl), the location of the event (different location each time like with the Olympics, or in a particular location like branding the Wimbledon Tennis tournament) and the region affected by the event (a city or a region like the Olympics or the whole country like the FIFA World Cup). Sports also serves as a tool for small countries like Qatar (Brannagan, & Giulianotti, 2015), to reposition themselves and become more significant political actors.

From a sociological perspective, sports play different roles in creating national identities (Gleaves & Llewellyn, 2014; Maguire, 2011) and imaged community (Hobsbawm, 1992), where athletes and teams represent a nation of millions. According to Hobsbawm (1992), between World War I and World War II, sports became “an expression of national struggle, and sportsmen representing their nation or state, primary expression of their imagined communities” (p.143). Thus, while connecting to culture and history and enjoying international exposure, countries see sports as a useful tool for countries and governments to demonstrate their soft power (Nye, 2004) and become more attractive for domestic and foreign audiences.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to analyze how Israeli sports organizations have used sports for nation branding and public diplomacy purposes. In this chapter I explain my methodological approach towards this study, the methods and procedures I used to collect data. I explain how the study was designed, how participants were chosen and how the data was collected and analyzed. I finish this chapter by reflecting and explaining how I made sure I followed ethical guidelines during this study.

Epistemology

I see myself as a socio-constructivist (Given, 2016), believing that there is no one empirical truth and that reality is socially constructed. According to Given (2016) “Constructivism is grounded in the belief that people construct reality, actively, based on how they see the world” (p. 15). This means the social actors are the ones constructing and reconstructing our beliefs of what reality is. Moreover, because people have different beliefs, according to a socio-constructivist approach there are multiple realities. This approach is on the other end of the spectrum of the positivist approach, which comes from a more realist perspective and argues that there is only one empirical reality.

Social-constructivism is affected by social norms, beliefs, experiences, place, geography, culture, language, and other factors that shape people’s views (Flick, 2014; Given, 2016). Socio-constructivism is one of the more common approaches taken by qualitative researchers (Flick, 2014; Given, 2016). As social-constructivists the “goal is to give voice to the variety of people’s experiences and highlight similarities and differences across participant groups” (Given, 2016, p. 16). A researcher coming from a

socio-constructivist approach, gives meanings to social interchanges, and plays a role in the process understanding the studied experience, construction of knowledge and interpretation, giving meanings to the findings (Flick, 2014).

Coming from that ontology and epistemology, I approached the research question: How do Israeli sports organizations use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy? As I do not see myself as a positivist and as my goals are to explore and analyze, rather than to identify a cause and effect, qualitative research methods are the most appropriate ones to use in this study (Flick, 2014).

Methods and Procedures

In the following sections I explain how I constructed the study, which tools I used, how I collected the data and how I analyzed it. According to McCracken (1988), the long interview is a one of the most powerful methods tools in qualitative research, for both descriptive and analytic purposes. As this study has an exploratory nature and examining purpose, interviews were chosen as the main method for collecting data.

I used purposeful sampling (Given, 2016) to choose the participants for the research. The study focuses on official Israel—only institutions, organizations, and people who represent Israel. The study originally focused on two specific groups, Israeli policy makers and representatives of sports organizations, both representing official Israel. Israeli policy makers include individuals that influence official Israeli policies, such as politicians and representatives of governmental agencies. Representatives of sports organizations include individuals involved in sports that officially represent Israel but are not necessarily directly under the control of the Israeli government. This group

includes representatives of Israeli sports administrations, such as NOCIL and representatives of national sports federations and associations. As there was very limited response from participants from policy making organizations, the focus of the study changed from focusing on two groups of participants to focusing mostly on sports organizations. Members from policy making organizations were still interviewed for context purposes.

Participants

According to Given (2016) “researchers typically expect to see saturation of themes once 15 to 18 interviews have been conducted” (p. 135). I followed Given’s (2016) estimation when designing this study as a general guideline for the number of participants I had in this study, however I reached saturation after eight interviews with members of sports associations. Overall I interviewed 14 participants for this study. 11 of the participants were from sports associations and three participants from policy making organizations. Originally I have contacted dozens of participants, but after receiving limited responses from participants from potential participants from policy making organizations, I focused the study on sports organizations. All the participants in this study were over 18 years old. 12 participants were men, and two were women.

Originally I planned on having two groups of participants, with one group consisting of members policy-making organizations in Israel and the second consisting of members of sports associations in Israel. This study design received IRB approval on October 31, 2017 (See Appendix C). Yet, although I have contacted dozens of members from the policy-making organizations group, due to lack of response and lack of will to

participate in the study, the focus of this study shifted towards sports organizations. At the first stage over 20 people were contacted via email. All sports organizations that I contacted were institutions that represent Israel and are responsible for Israeli sports, but are not under the direct control of the Israeli government. I conducted interviews with 11 participants officially representing sports organizations from associations, federations, national committees and the Maccabiah Movement.

For confidentiality purposes, the names of the participants were not used, but instead each participant was assigned a letter. The 11 participants from sports organizations received the letters: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, F, and G. The three participants from the policy-making offices received the letters X, Y and Z. Table 1 summarizes the position, affiliations and names of the participants.

Data Collection

My main instrument for the data collection was semi-structured interviews (Charmaz, 2015; Roulston, 2010). A semi-structured interview uses pre-determined open-ended questions that may be answered based on the interviewee's knowledge and understanding, while additionally having hypothesis-directed and theory based questions based on scientific literature (Flick, 2014). The purpose of these questions is to "make the interviewees' implicit knowledge, more explicit" (Flick, 2014, p. 219). As part of the semi-structured format, additional questions might arise in the course of each interview. These questions are based on literature from place branding and public diplomacy. These questions are more open to interpretation and address different aspect of public

Table 1. Participants' Information

Pseudonym	Position and Affiliation
Participant A	High-level official in the Israeli Gymnastics Federation
Participant B	High-level official in the Israeli Swimming Association
Participant C	Official in the Israeli Basketball Association
Participant D	High-level official in the Israeli Sailing Association
Participant E	Official in the Israeli Judo Association
Participant F	Official in the Israeli Volleyball Association
Participant G	High-level official in World Maccabiah Union and the 2017 Maccabiah Organizing Committee
Participant H	High-level Official in the National Olympic Committee of Israel
Participant I	High-level Official in the National Paralympic Committee of Israel
Participant J	Official in the Israeli Athletics Association ²
Participant K	High-level official in the Israeli Football Association
Participant X	Official in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Participant Y	Official in the Israeli Ministry of Tourism
Participant Z	High-level official in the Israeli Sports Administration/ Ministry of Sports and Culture

² In Israel the Israeli Athletics Association is the sports organization that regulates track and field.

diplomacy such as foreign policy, and questions on nation branding that address tourism, the character of the people and more. Additionally, I constructed questions based on the literature about Israel, nation branding, public diplomacy, and sports. These questions specifically confront the participant with issues that are relevant to the situation in Israel, such as having a bypassing message to the conflict, the role of terrorism, and the Israeli-Arabic dispute. This way the interview guide enables me to start with a broad question that is open to the interpretation of the interviewee, but still go to specifics.

The identity of the interviewees was kept confidential. Each interview was recorded by at least one recording device. The interviewees signed a consent form prior to the interview (Appendix B). While the interviews were conducted in Hebrew, the consent form the participants signed was in English. Most Israelis, especially in managerial positions who are engaged with international audiences, are proficient in English and able to understand the consent form. English courses and the use of English are required in the Israeli education system since elementary school, through high school and of course in higher education. The participants in this study were in positions that require them to represent official Israel, including at international events, engage with international audiences or use English as part of their work. Their level of English was fluent enough to understand the consent form. I also verbally explained about the study before the interview officially started. Upon return to the campus of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, the signed consent forms were kept separate from other records in a locked filing cabinet in HPER Building, at the University of Tennessee. As part of the

ethical review of this study, the interview guides (Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix B) also received IRB approval (Appendix C) on October 31, 2017.

I conducted all 14 interviews face-to-face during December 2018 in Israel. The two last interviews were conducted on the last day of the year, December 31, 2017. As my native language is Hebrew and most of the participants' native language is Hebrew, all interviews were held in the Hebrew language. For member checking purposes, once finishing transcribing and translating the data, I sent a copy of the Hebrew transcripts and English translations to all participants. As some participants wanted to slightly modify their answers, I corrected or deleted answers according to their requests. To supplement the interviews, enrich the study and for triangulation purposes (Flick, 2014), I referred to some media articles as well. I used media sources, especially from Israeli and international news websites in English to elaborate and to contextualize the interviews.

Data Analysis

I finished translating the data by the end of 2018. Having the author translating interviews in foreign languages to English, is a common approach in the academia, previously used by Israeli sports researchers (Bernstein, 2002). During January 2018, after returning from Israel to Tennessee, I coded all data. To improve trustworthiness my advisor, Dr. Lars Dzikus, also had access to the raw data, to the translated transcripts, and to the coding process.

I analyzed the data. To analyze the interviews, I used a hybrid coding process, influenced by both deductive and inductive approaches (Saldaña, 2016). With the exploratory purpose of the research, a constructivist ontology and an interpretive epistemology (Flick, 2016), I did not want to constrain myself only to a fixed codes list

prior to collecting the data. This means, I identified new codes, categories, and themes from the data, without having a goal of building a new theory.

I constructed the questions in the Interview Guide (see Appendix A) for this study based on existing literature on place branding, public diplomacy and sports diplomacy, and Israel. Based on existing literature, the questions in this interview guide focused on foreign policy, politics, economy, tourism destination image, product country image, culture, history, morality, character of the people, technology, and the Israeli-Arabic dispute (Avraham, 2009; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Gilboa, 2006; Heslop, Nadeau, and O'Reilly, 2010; Nadeau et al., 2008; Nye, 2004; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). Because the original study focused on two groups of participants. Although the focus of this study shifted to sports organizations, when interviewing members of policy-making organizations I used the interview guide that was originally constructed for that group.

While the interview guide was influenced by existing theories and research designs in country image, place branding and public diplomacy research, the data from the interviews were inductively coded using in-vivo coding and categorizing and focus coding was used to create the themes whenever in-vivo was not applicable (Saldaña, 2016). As the focus of the study shifted towards sports organizations, and the purpose of the study was to analyze how Israeli sports organizations have used sports for nation branding and public diplomacy purposes, I coded only the data from participants from sports organizations. I transcribed all the interviews with members from policy-making organizations, but translated only relevant segments that I quoted in the study.

I coded the data manually using three stages of coding. In the first coding stage of the interviews with members of sports organizations, I used in-vivo coding for all data from all the participants, using the words of the participants as the names of the codes (Saldaña, 2016). In-vivo coding, also referred to as “literal coding” or “verbatim coding” captures the actual words of the participants (Saldaña, 2016, p. 105). The second round of coding was also in-vivo, trying to stay as close as possible to the words of the participants to create categories. As the data were translated from Hebrew to English, it was important to stay as close as possible to the original meaning. According to Saldaña (2016), using in-vivo coding is appropriate in all qualitative research studies, especially those that “prioritize and honor the participants’ voice” (p. 106). The limitation of in-vivo coding is that it is a descriptive coding strategy that “can limit your ability to transcend data to more conceptual and theoretical levels of analysis” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 107). This study had also an exploratory nature and I wanted to stay as close as possible to the words of the participants, thus, in-vivo coding was a fitting strategy for the first two rounds of the coding process.

For example, the participant from the Israeli Basketball Association said: “I think that the most important thing is that we separate politics. We are not involved with politics.” In the first round of coding I gave this statement the code “Separate politics.” The participant from the Israeli Volleyball Association said: “I don’t know Israel’s foreign policy to say if we serve it.” I gave that statement the code “Don’t know Israel’s foreign policy.” In the second round of coding, I grouped these two codes together, along with other relevant codes, creating the category “Sports, Advocacy, and Diplomacy”.

Thus, while in the first round of coding I used the exact words of the participants, in the second round I did not restrict myself to use their exact words, but I chose inclusive categories that captured the meanings of the participants' statements.

The third phase of coding was looking for patterns using focused coding. This stage had a more analytic nature than the first two rounds of coding. According to (Saldaña, 2016), "focused coding searches for the most frequent or significant codes to develop the most salient categories in the data" (p. 240). According to Charmaz (2014), focused coding requires to distinguish which codes "have greater analytic power." Thus, at this point of the analysis, I was more flexible and not restricted only to the words of the participants in each group, but trying to find umbrella themes to capture the most significant codes and identify patterns between the categories. The codes, categories and themes were not determined a-priori. However, based on previous research and the way I designed the interview guide, I expected the participants to address several issues, which became themes that I might have anticipated. For example, there were direct questions about the conflict or about hosting sports events in Israel that led to codes that I identified as significant enough to eventually construct themes named "*The Conflict*," and "*Hosting Sports Events*." However, these themes were not determined prior to the study.

Theme 1: *The Conflict* captured how the participants discussed the Israeli-Arabic dispute in the context of their ability to use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy purposes. The categories in this theme were captured how different countries, states, and organizations influenced Israeli sports organizations. The categories differ by the different relations each state or organization has with the State of Israel. Because of

the centrality of the Israeli-Arabic conflict, the categories discussed in this theme also relate to categories that are discussed in all the other four themes as well which creates a certain overlap. For example, some of the categories include manifestation of the conflict that limits Israel's ability to host sports events which also have an impact on the categories in Theme 2: *Hosting Sports Events*.

Theme 2: *Hosting Sports Events* captured the participants' reflections on impacts of hosting international events on Israel's public diplomacy or nation branding. Examples of categories include the impact on tourism when hosting events, showcasing Israeli history and culture through tours to historical places and ceremonies, and showing different sides of the country. The categories in this theme were divided based on the different impacts that participants identified, but also based on limitations of hosting. This theme as well overlaps with other themes, such as with Theme 4: *Relations with the State*, as hosting requires collaborations with different governmental agencies.

Theme 3: *Representation* expressed participants' explanations of how Israeli sports associations use sport to influence Israel's public diplomacy and nation branding through representation of the state. There was near consensus that the best way to represent Israel is through winning and bringing positive attention to Israel through athletic success. The athletes serve as ambassadors by reflecting Israeli values and representing the State of Israel. Categories in this theme capture how participants from most sports associations discussed the implications of representation which participants emphasized. This theme also overlaps with several other themes, such as with Theme 5: *Challenges and Opportunities*. In this theme the category "Diverse Melting Pot" captures

how the participants addressed inclusion in Israeli national teams, while in theme 5: *Challenges and Opportunities*, the category “Sports and Development for Peace” also discusses the importance of inclusion.

Theme 4: *Relations with the State* reflected the way participants discussed the relationship between Israeli sports associations and government agencies from the State of Israel. I identified a pattern between the categories in this theme based on the relations sports organizations have with different governmental agencies and based on how participants reflected about the role of their organization in comparison to the State of Israel. Categories in this theme also overlap with categories in other themes, as such as when the conflict requires action from the state which is discussed in Theme 1: *The Conflict* or when hosting sports events in Israel, which is discussed in Theme 2: *Hosting Sports Events*.

Theme 5: *Challenges and Opportunities* captured categories where participants saw potential for improvement, if changes would be undertaken. The categories in this theme reflect ways that participants identified how sports could be better used for nation branding and public diplomacy purposes. This theme overlaps with some of the previous four themes, as challenges that were identified because of the conflict, the relations with government agencies or lack of facilities to host professional sports events, led participants to think of creative future opportunities. This theme was very important for the practical recommendations of this study.

Overall, the five themes are distinctive from each other, but they also relate to each other, which creates certain overlaps. To make sure the themes are as inclusive as

possible, each theme consisted of data coming from all 11 participants from all sports organizations. While the names of the categories stayed as close as possible to the words of the participants, the names of the themes were inclusive umbrella terms that included the coded categories, but the terms themselves were not necessarily associated with the participants or even Israel.

After the analysis stage, I wrote up the results of the coding process. The findings of this study are discussed in length in Chapter Four of the dissertation. Because of the transitions between languages and for time purposes, I decided to write the findings in length, not only reflecting the themes but also all the categories that consisted each theme. Direct quotes of all 11 participants from the sports organizations are included in the findings of each one of the five themes. Direct quotes of members of policy making offices are also included in each theme, for context purposes. In Chapter five: Discussion, I analyzed the results, comparing the findings with the theoretical framework and with the literature review, emphasizing how this research contributes to existing knowledge.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

According to Morrow (2005), “qualitative research, ensuing from a variety of disciplines, paradigms, and epistemologies, embraces multiple standards of quality, known variously as validity, credibility, rigor, or trustworthiness” (p. 250). I believe that trustworthiness in research is achieved by rigorously following fair and ethical procedures and by being reflexive about your own experiences and the experiences of the participants. This corresponds with Morrow’s (2005) emphasis on reflexivity, especially when coming from constructivist ontology.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) pointed out eight criteria of constructing qualitative research: methodological consistency, clarity of purpose, self-awareness, training of the researcher in qualitative research, feeling and sensitivity for the topic, willingness to work hard, methodological awareness, and desire to do the research for its own sake. Morrow (2005) also refers to intrinsic criteria as relevant for constructivist qualitative researchers.

This is how I addressed Corbin and Strauss' (2008) criteria for quality and ethical research:

- (a) Methodological Consistency: The ontology, epistemology, and methodology are explained in the first and third chapter of the dissertation and guided the data collecting methods and the interview guide. This also means following the research protocols, of ethical approval by the Institutional Review Board (appendix C), having a consent form (appendix B), an interview guide (appendix A), recoding the data or keeping notes and having the data kept in a password secured computer.
- (b) Clarity of purpose: The purpose of the research is to analyze how Israeli sports organizations use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy purpose. This purpose is stated several times during the dissertation, almost in every chapter.
- (c) Self Awareness: This research is a result of over a decade of academic and professional work and over three and a half decades of life experience, related directly or indirectly to the content of this research. A subjectivity statement is

expressed in the introduction section, explaining my positionality towards this research.

- (d) Training: Prior to this study, I have taken three qualitative courses at the University of Tennessee and one at the University of Ottawa, in Canada. This research was the third qualitative research I conducted at the University of Tennessee in the area of sports and Israel, after conducting research in the summer of 2016 about Israel's participation in the Olympic Games in Rio and in the summer of 2017, on Israel and the Maccabiah Games.
- (e) Feeling and sensitivity for the topic: I have been covering and/or researching sports in Israel for almost a decade and a half. I have spent ample time and money attending events and ceremonies regarding this research and several of the potential participants have known me for that period of time. Discussing controversial issues and talking to families of terror victims, requires a high amount of sensitivity and self-awareness, towards them and towards the topic.
- (f) Willing to work hard: This research is a product of over a decade of long and hard work with many bumps in the road. I am still here, and more focused than ever. The long journey and the rigorous procedures are described in the subjectivity statement.
- (g) Methodological awareness: To address potential criticism, I wrote subjectivity statement explaining my positionality towards the research and I tried to achieve triangulation by comparing answers to different publications in media outlets.

(h) Desire to do the research for its own sake: As mentioned, this is more than just a research that ends with a paper, a publication or a degree. I believe I contribute to knowledge and to the field, shedding light on important issues that have yet to be researched enough. My goal was to do justice both with the research and with the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Based on the interviews, five different themes emerged from the data. For each theme I discuss the common links between the different categories that emerged from the data, with each one of the participants quoted at least once in every theme. In the findings I also show how participants from the governmental ministries addressed each theme. The themes are: (1) *The Conflict*, (2) *Hosting in the Country*, (3) *Representation*, (4) *Relations with the State*, and (5) *Challenges and Opportunities*.

The participants from the three governmental offices shed light on the context in which sports organizations in Israel use sports for public diplomacy and nation branding purposes and help sports organizations in relations to the State of Israel. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the governmental ministry that shapes and implements the branding of Israel and of Israel's, Israel's foreign policy, and Israel's public diplomacy (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). During this study, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was also the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu. For this study, I interviewed Participant X, an official in the Israeli Foreign Ministry with impact on shaping Israel's brand. According to participant X, "Sport is not the number one priority in the branding of Israel, and we are not so good in sport." The Ministry of Foreign Affairs used an external branding company which defined Israel's branding strategy as "Creative Energy." According to participant X, the branding of "Creative Energy" includes three main narratives: "We said, the first one is Building the Future, the second is Vibrant Diversity and the third is called Entrepreneurial Zeal." Participant X further explained,

Building the Future is how the Israeli character is a character that looks towards the future, beyond the difficulties of daily life. How the pioneers built the country. In a modern sense, it is not just about Israel, but building a better future for the rest of the world. It is manifested mostly through innovation in the fields of medicine and agriculture. Vibrant Diversity is the human diversity that in Israel there are people from all over the world, from many nations and a very vibrant and diverse [nation] that grows... The Israeli kitchen is a mix of many flavors. Israeli creativity. A lot of it comes from diversity creating new ideas. That's the second. The third is Entrepreneurial Zeal, which is start-up nation. This is the biggest number of start-ups per-capita in the world. Today, these are the core of the Israeli branding.

Another important ministry that has impact on the way Israel is being exposed to the world is the Ministry of Tourism (Government Services and Information Website, 2018). According to Participant Y, an official in the Ministry of Tourism that has influence on the branding policy of Israel, the goal of the Ministry is not to improve Israel's public diplomacy for political purposes but to bring more tourists to Israel. Participant Y mentioned that the Ministry of Tourism focuses on "the branding of Israel as a tourism destination, not as a country." Participant Y explained,

Maybe tourism is included in the branding of Israel, but we focus on tourism. So in tourism branding, Israel is perceived as a historical-

religious destination. The use of sport events helps us to normalize it, make it more pluralistic, more normal, and more modern.

One of the joint campaigns between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism was the branding of Israel as “Land of Creation.” There are two campaigns that the Ministry of Tourism uses, “Land of Creation” in the United States and “Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem” in Europe. According to Participant Y from the Ministry of Tourism, “Land of Creation has a double meaning, the creativity and also the creation, the innovation and also the nation where the monotheistic religions were created, etc.”

While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism have more focus on the strategic side of the branding of Israel and interface with sports organizations, the Ministry that is in daily contact with Israeli sports organizations is the Ministry of Culture and Sport (Ministry of Culture and Sport, 2018). Its Sports Administration is the office that focuses on sports. As a result, the Sports Administration is more involved in the tactical aspects of Israeli sports and its interaction with the State of Israel. According to Participant Z, a high-level official in the Sports Administration, some of the emphasis on Israel’s branding and public diplomacy manifest in representations of national teams, emphasis on Israeli symbols, and hosting sport events in Israel. According to participant X “everyone who comes to the country and is positively impressed, of course becomes an excellent ambassador.” While the themes emerged from a thematic analysis of the interviews with members of sports organizations, in each theme I also discuss relevant policies and points of interactions

with the State of Israel that participants from sports organizations raised. Table 2 portrays the themes and the categories in this study.

Because this study focuses on nation branding and public diplomacy in a country that is going through a prolonged conflict, the first theme that is discussed is The Conflict. The themes of Hosting in the Country, Representation and Relations with the State are discussed in no particular order. Theme 5: Challenges and Opportunities is discussed last as part of these theme focuses on future suggestions which are influenced by some of the implications that are discussed in the first four themes.

Theme 1: The Conflict

The Israeli-Arabic conflict is one of the longest and most complicated ongoing political disputes the world has faced in the last decade. The Israeli-Arabic dispute has an impact on every governmental office in Israel and on every sphere in Israeli society, including sports (Alperovich, 2007; Galily, 2007; Harif, 2011). Every participant discussed various implications of the dispute, usually in a context of hurting the possibilities of the respective organization to maximize its potential for using sports for nation branding and public diplomacy purposes. Each participant from the governmental offices also addressed implications of the dispute and how it limits the possibilities of using Israeli sports for branding and public diplomacy purposes. One example is the difficulties Israel has in coping with Arabic Countries from the Gulf that in the last decades invested money and resources hosting world championships and sponsored some of the biggest football clubs in the world (Aharoni & Zanziper, 2015; Etchelles, 2015; i24news, 2015; Thani & Heenam, 2017).

Table 2. Themes and Categories

Themes	1. The Conflict	2. Hosting in the Country	3. Representation	4. Relations with the State	5. Challenges and Opportunities
Categories	Palestine	Impact on Tourism and Economy	Importance of Winning	Financial Dependencies	SportTech Nation
	Arabic and Muslim Countries from the Gulf	History and Culture	Israeli Athletes as Ambassadors	Sports, Advocacy and Diplomacy	Sports and Development for Peace
	Iran	Continental and World Events	Israeli Symbols	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Influence in International Associations
	Lebanon	Level of Hospitality	Israeli Character	Ministry of Tourism	Review Sports Priorities
	Egypt	Influencers and New Ambassadors	Commemoration	Ministry of Sports and Culture	Change of National Priorities
	Turkey	Different Sides of the Country	Diverse Melting Pot	Other Governmental Offices	
	Jordan	Exposure through International media	Security and Military		
	Other Arabic and Muslim Countries	Facilities Issues	The Jewish Connection		
	BDS Movement	Maccabiah Games			

According to Participant Y from the Ministry of Tourism, it is difficult to find an international sports club that would like to have a sponsorship that relates to the State of Israel. Participant Y explained that the clubs do not call it a political protest, but prefer to avoid this dilemma. According to Spanish media, the Spanish football club Sevilla FC rejected a sponsorship deal advertising tourism in Israel on their shirts (Dorsey, 2016). The participant from the Ministry of Tourism said, “There is a political protest. They don’t call it that way, but you see they don’t want.” Participant Y said,

For a long time we searched for a football club to sponsor. The truth is that we wanted the best [football club]. And one, it is not very easy to find those who would agree to have the logo of Israel on their shirt. And two, the cost is enormous.

The Israeli-Arabic dispute has many sides, involving different countries in different ways. This theme captures how the participants discussed the implications of the Israeli-Arabic dispute through their lenses. The categories in this theme are divided based on the different states and how their relations with Israel, impact how Israeli sports organizations use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy purposes.

Palestine. Among all the countries and states that were mentioned in the context of the impact of the Israeli-Arabic dispute on Israeli sports, the Israeli-Palestinian dispute came up the most. The political and military situation between Israel and Palestine does not enable free movement between Gaza Strip and the West Bank for security reasons. Israeli sports organizations such as the NOCIL, the National Paralympic Committee of Israel, the Israeli Football Association and the Israeli Athletics Association, discussed

their roles of mediating between sports organizations in Palestine, Israeli authorities and international institutions. According to Participant I, a high-level official in the National Paralympic Committee of Israel, before Paralympic Games the committee receives requests from the Palestinians to contact Israeli authorities about exit permits from Gaza Strip. Participant I said, “It’s us facing the Israeli security people, to allow disabled athletes to come to the Paralympic Games from Gaza. There are always last minute problems, exit permits, and we are always being involved.” Participant H, a high-level official in NOCIL gave an example where the Israeli organization could not solve the situation due to security reasons. According to Participant H, “we had a story like this now with taekwondo that was not resolved. I got back to the IOC with a response that this guy is a threat to the State of Israel, so of course we will not intervene.”

Djibril Rajoub is the president of the National Olympic Committee of Palestine and is also the president of the Palestinian Football Association and a member of the Palestinian Government. In 2014 the Palestinian Football Association approached FIFA with a demand to exclude the Israeli Football Association from the organization based on several claims (Al Jazeera and agencies, 2015; Bar, Yarchi & Galily, 2017; Dorsey, 2017). According to Participant K, a high-level official in the Israeli Football Association, Rajoub was using his athletics position to better position himself as a Palestinian politician:

...the political move that was done by the Palestinians... by the way, the president of the Palestinian Football Association is a Minister in the Palestinian Government himself, so there it was already clear that sport

and politics are being mixed and he [Rajoub] brought his personal agendas into this move.

Whether or not the demand to exclude Israel from FIFA was politically motivated, the possibility of being sanctioned by an influential international organization, threatened to position Israel together with countries such as Apartheid South Africa who was excluded from the Olympic Movement from the 1960s to the 1990s (MacLean, 2014). Participant K explained the claims of the Palestinians and how the Israeli Football Association addressed them. According to the member from the Israeli Football Association, the first Palestinian claim concerned restrictions on Palestinians' movement in and out of Gaza and the West Bank. Participant K said,

On the other hand, they [The Palestinians] argued that their activities are being hurt because they can't, their athletes cannot go in and out freely. So that influences their ability to develop football, to play fairly against other football opponents. Another argument that came up was about goods, equipment, donations they receive. Everything goes through the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories, through the army, through the Shin-Bet [Israel's Secret Service]. So these are things that according to them, made their activity difficult. Again, these are not things that are directly related to the Israeli Football Association, but, there is no doubt that on this issue we needed to serve as a mediator.

Participant K said that another argument that the Palestinian raised was about racism in Israeli sports. The participant from the Israeli Football Association

acknowledged there is a problem with some racist fan bases in Israeli football, and addressed the club Beitar Jerusalem, however he also claimed that these incidents are not institutional. Moreover, Participant K emphasized the inclusions of Israeli-Arabs in the Israeli Football Association and in Israeli football and claimed that unfortunately racism in football is a global problem. Participant K said,

We have Arabs in the management of the association, and we have Arab teams. In the way that we see it, our activity, the football activity, bridges.

It is part of the Israeli being, part of the activities of the football association. And the attempt to portray us like we are some sort of association that regulates according to Apartheid system is absurd.

Everyone here has voting rights, including the Arab representatives that sit in the Israeli Football Association. There is no discrimination here whatsoever. Unfortunately, we do experience different acts of racism, but these are things that are seen and exist all over the world.

According to Participant K the third and final demand of the Palestinians referred to five Israeli football clubs that compete under the Israeli Football Association but were geographically located in territories that were conquered by Israel after the 1967 Six Days War. The demand not only questioned the governance of the Israeli Football Association, but also raised the question about what are the borders of the State of Israel. According to Participant K, the Palestinians recognized that by challenging the legitimacy of the five clubs playing in the West Bank, they might raise a political

questioning what Israel's borders are and where is the jurisdiction of the Israeli Football Association. Participant K explained,

FIFA's regulations are very careful from getting into any kind of political meanings. However, at the same time they do regulate that activities needs to take place inside the territories of the association. And when you ask what is the territory of the Israeli Football Association and what is the territory of the Palestinian Football Association, then naturally political questions rise. Because the borders of the State of Israel are not fixed, let's call it that way, like in other places in the world. There are over 300 border conflicts in the world, even in countries that you can't image. Where exactly do you set the border of the country? Now, to take that and to throw it on the boundaries of the Football Association, it becomes more complicated.

The borders of Israel are among the most polarizing issues in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Wars, different contradicting resolutions by the United Nations and Peace Accords, are among the reasons why the borders of Israel are still contested. According to Participant K, the Israeli Football Association is not equipped to address political issues, but focuses on regulating sports. Participant K explained,

The Palestinians identified a question here: Wait, what are our borders? 1967? Decisions of the United Nations? We argued different arguments, that there are the Oslo Accords that regulate the civilian activities and the military activities in those territories. It was clear they [The Palestinians]

are taking advantage here, taking a situation [of five clubs registered in the Israeli Football Association playing in territories Israel conquered in 1967] and bringing it to the political field through sport. At that stage it was clear to us, as the Israeli Football Association, that we cannot handle these questions. We do not have a political agenda and from our perspective, clubs that are registered with us, are registered with us.

The member from the Israeli Football Association said that their approach was to emphasize that they are a non-political body and that football clubs in contested territories should register with the football associations they feel affiliated with as the main goal of the organizations is to regulate football. Participant K said,

We think that whoever wants to play football should play football. You want to register with us? Come register with us. You want to register with the Palestinians? Go register with the Palestinians. We don't come with the need of diving into political questions.

Thus, while at least to the date of the publication of this study, Israel managed to fight off demands of exclusions, negative issues such as security restrictions, occupation, racism and an ongoing conflict are being raised in the context of Israeli sports association. Moreover, several Israeli organizations including the Israeli Swimming Association, the Maccabiah Movement and others, mentioned that when the conflict escalates into violence, there are several implications including cancelling competitions, hosting competitions abroad, or postponing the local leagues. These implications all damage Israel's opportunities to use sports for improving Israel's branding and Israel's

political image. According to Participant C, an official in the Israeli Basketball Association, when the conflict escalates into violence, there are times when Israeli teams are forced to host abroad. Participant C explained,

It [the Israel Basketball National Team hosting abroad] happened when there were wars here in 2014. In 2014 Israel hosted the qualifications to the European Championship in Cyprus. In 2006, if I recall correctly... When was the Second Lebanon War? We hosted in Bulgaria. It happens. It happens and sometimes it makes sense [to host abroad]. Sometimes it doesn't make sense. When rockets are falling here, you do not want to host here an opponent.

Most of the participants also discussed Palestinian terrorism. The most common terror attacks that were discussed were of course the Munich Massacre and the different Intifadas, violent events of Palestinian uprisings that questioned Israel's ability to host sport events during times of tension. According to Participant B, a high-level official in the Israeli Swimming Association, a violent outburst in 2015 jeopardized the hosting of the Short-Course European Championship. Participant B explained that the European Swimming League (LEN), were concerned about hosting the competition in Israel.

What happened was that a month and a half before [the European Championship], really around the terrible murders in France and the terror attacks that started here [in Israel], LEN sent us a message that they are afraid to come to a State of Israel. [Israel] Being very militant and there is an intifada, and a mess, so they are afraid to host here a championship.

The competition eventually took place in Israel and according to the Israeli Swimming Association and to governmental ministries was a diplomatic success. However, this example shows how fragile the situation in Israel is, and that every time the Israeli-Palestinian disputes escalates, international sports competitions in Israel are in jeopardy.

Arabic and Muslim Countries from the Gulf. One of the most repeated concerns Israeli sports associations raised was the growing dominance of Countries and Emirates in the Arabic Gulf when it comes to hosting sport events. These countries include: Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and especially Abu-Dhabi and Dubai, Oman, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The commonality between these states is the wealth of the states and their growing influence in the world of sports when it comes to hosting sport events and influencing international organizations. Unlike the Israeli-Palestinian dispute that escalates into violence, the Israeli-Arabic conflict manifests through sports especially when international events are scheduled to be held in the Arabic Gulf Countries. Several Israeli sports organizations complained that they had problems either with being granted visas to enter the countries or that the Israeli athletes were not allowed to compete with Israeli symbols such as the Israeli flag, having the national anthem played or with the Israeli code ISR. Several Israeli organizations mentioned the wealth of the Gulf countries as the main reason why they manage to host prestigious international events. Participant D, a high-level official from the Israeli Sailing Association said,

Why they [International Federations] wanted those [Arab Gulf Countries] to host in the first place? Because they [Arab Gulf Countries] have money.

It's not that their sailing is too developed. They are not very good in this discipline, but they have money and suddenly there was this wave of more and more Muslim countries hosting. You see in the schedule that more countries are granted to host competitions because they have money. And we came to a conclusion that if we will not shout, and will not make noise, we will not go and not participate, not in world championships and not in... that. And it worked.

Participant D explained that after not being granted visas to Oman and missing out a competition, the Sailing Federation demanded from the International Federation that Israel's participation will be secured in every future event:

They asked Israel and all the relevant countries, Oman, Dubai, Malaysia, to produce a letter from a governmental ministry, the Foreign Affairs, the [Ministry of] Sports and such, that in case we host an international tournament athletes from any country, including enemy countries or Muslim countries will be allowed to enter. I managed to bring such a letter. I phrased it in English and the Sports Ministry signed it, and I sent it. But our friendly countries did not do that, so a competition, another one that was supposed to be in Oman was cancelled. They do not host anymore.

Other examples of political incidents with Arab and Muslim Countries from the Gulf that were raised by the participants included a judo tournament in Abu-Dhabi that Israelis were not allowed to compete with Israeli symbols, a Bahraini runner from Kenya

that lost his citizenship after competing in Israel, different visa issues with Qatar and Oman and an athlete from Saudi Arabia who is in friendly relations with an Israeli athlete but is not allowed to show that in public.

On the other hand, several participants from Israeli sports associations who were hosted in Arabic and Muslim Gulf Countries in international conferences, complimented the hosts and described a very respectful atmosphere. Moreover, the branding attempts of Arabic Gulf Countries to use their wealth to strengthen their ties with the Western World are also appreciated by several participants who described the process as a positive one. According to Participant B from the Israeli Swimming Association “it is important to them [Arabic Gulf Countries] to global audiences”. The participant claimed that the investments in sports are attempts by Bahrain, Dubai and other countries from the Gulf “to open themselves to the Western World.”

Iran. While with the Gulf Countries Israel might not have official relations, they are still not defined as enemy countries. Iran on the other hand is defined as an enemy country. The implication of that is that Israel actively does not send teams to compete in Iran. “There are competitions where unfortunately we can’t compete in. There is a tour competition in Iran,” explained Participant F, an official in the Israeli Volleyball Association. According to Participant F, Israel does not send athletes to compete in Iran even if it means they will lose potential ranking points that other athletes could gain. Participant F said,

First of all, we will not take the chance in with an enemy country. There is a difference between a country like Iran to countries that with them the

diplomatic relations... for that matter, we don't have an embassy, or there are no defined relations on the table. For that matter, Oman or Malaysia. All those countries that we send below the radar, or send without doing a significant buzz about it. But Iran... with Iran we are the active ones of not going.

Yet the most common political manifestation when it comes to Israel and Iran in sports is when Iranian athletes withdraw from competitions against Israel, claiming that they are injured. According to Participant H from NOCIL, Iranian athletes that are forced to withdraw from competitions against Israelis are the victims. On the other hand, several participants said that there are some Iranians who are in friendly relations with Israelis, but just behind the scenes. Participant H explained that he thought about how cruel a hypothetical situation would be for Israeli athletes, such as if Olympic medalist Yarden Gerbi would be forced to withdraw from a competition because of political reasons. Participant H said,

I feel sorry for them [for the Iranians] for that [withdrawing from competitions against Israelis]. This is why I feel sorry for the athletes. That they are... Think about it. Think about someone like Yarden [Gerbi] that we would suddenly tell here, after coming to Rio, [being] twice World Champion and World Championship Finalist, a medalist in the European Championship, comes to the Games and we tell here: "Listen you are sick now, you are not facing the Iranian." Think about Yarden. The entire

career goes down the drain. So clearly these Iranians, behind the scenes are regular people, like me and you.

Lebanon. Lebanon is a country that considers Israel as an enemy state and has laws that restrict interactions with Israelis (Now, 2011; Reiche, 2018). Participants in this study referred to Lebanon when discussing hosting sports events abroad during the Second Lebanon War in 2006 and when discussing incidents when Lebanese officials were reluctant to associate with Israelis at international events. One of the incidents mentioned was during the 2016 Olympic Games, when the head of the Lebanese delegation refused to share a shuttle bus with the Israeli delegation to the Opening Ceremony. Participant H from the Olympic Committee emphasizes that when these incidents happen, Israel comes out as the good side for willing to collaborate. He said, “you remember the story we had in Rio with the Lebanese. We were the good side on that issue. It did not bother us to enter a bus with the Lebanese.”

While some participants describe cold meetings with Lebanese officials, some describe very warm ones. Participant D from the Israeli Sailing Association described friendly encounters with a Lebanese official at an international conference. “In the last assembly in Athens, the Lebanese arrived, and we were together all day, and we laughed. He’s an adorable guy. He knew my predecessor, and he hugged me, and kissed me and ‘send her my regards’, etc.” This again shows that behind the scenes, sometimes there are warm relations between representatives from Israel and representatives from Muslim and Arabic countries that Israel does not have official relations with.

Egypt. Unlike with Lebanon, Iran, or the Gulf Countries, Israel and Egypt signed a Peace Treaty in 1979 and have official relations (Pinson, Levy & Soker, 2010). As a result, Egypt officially acknowledges the existence of Israel, and Egyptian athletes are required to compete against Israelis. With that said, in the past years there were several incidents where Egyptian athletes refused to shake hands with Israelis in sports events. One incident that the participants mentioned several times was in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. After Israeli judoka Ori Sasson won the competition against Egyptian Islam El-Shehaby, Sasson walked towards the Egyptian extending his hand for a handshake, but was refused. As this incident was covered internationally, several participants recalled it saying how Sasson managed to create a positive image of Israel, as a country that is seeking for peace but being refused. Participant E, an official from the Israeli Judo Association explained,

I mean, you come to compete in against a young Egyptian, a guy and he refuses to shake hands. You come to compete against all these opponents and they suddenly get injured. So called. So Israel is left like... We won. How did you win? Because he did not show up. Why didn't he show up? Everyone understands. I think the main part is that it created a lot of media exposure when Ori Sasson beat the Egyptian opponent. There Ori won and extended his hand to shake and he [the Egyptian] did not. This was a huge diplomatic story. I don't know how much the State of Israel used it. Like is written in the Declaration of Independence, Israel will always extend a hand for peace to its neighbors. And that was exactly the image.

This example shows that even with countries that Israel has peace agreements with, there are political incidents and that Israelis use these opportunities to showcase Israeli values and create an image that serves the athlete, the organization and the country.

Turkey. Since the 1990s, Israeli sports organizations officially compete in European competitions (Afek, 1994a), the Israeli Football Association is a member of UEFA and the NOCIL is a member of the European Olympic Committees. In European competition, Israeli national teams, clubs and athletes compete in every country and against opponents from every country. With that said, Israel has faced security concerns and hostile environments when competing in Turkey. Participant A, a high-level official in the Israeli Gymnastics Association, described the difficulties that Israeli security authorities such as the Israeli Secret Service (The Shin-Bet) put on the association before a World Championship in Rhythmic Gymnastics that was held in Izmir, Turkey, and was part of the qualification criteria for the 2016 Olympic Games. Participant A said, “Two years ago the World Championships were in Izmir, Turkey, while there was a big diplomatic crisis and the Israeli Security Agency prohibited the national team to go, but at the end we got the permission and we went.”

Participant A also described the struggles the Israeli Gymnastics Federations had to go through with Israeli security:

The same tension in [the World Championship in] Izmir, two years ago, which was the [Olympic] criteria. No games. If the national team was not there, it could not compete in the Olympic Games. Now, because there is

some instruction by the Shin-Bet, you will throw away two years that the federation and the State have invested millions in a team of very good gymnasts? Because the Shin-Bet decided that not [to go]? So no. So we went up to the Minister of Defense and to the Head of the Shin-Bet.

This example shows that even when competing in European competitions Israeli sports organizations have political and security problems. This example also shows that even when a Muslim or an Arabic country is not boycotting the Israelis, Israeli security authorities add difficulties to Israel's participations and at times even restrict it. On this occasion, the matter was resolved and the national team competed and qualified for the Olympic Games.

Jordan. In most cases, the participants described negative incidents regarding the Israeli-Arabic dispute. However, when it comes to Jordan, a country that Israel has a Peace Treaty with since 1994 (Pinson, Levy & Soker, 2010), participants from Israeli sports organizations focus on collaborations between the countries and on inviting Jordanian athletes to compete in Israel. Participant J an official from the Israeli Athletics Association said, "we invite athletes from Jordan to the Tiberius Marathon. A lot of times there are also runners from Jordan in the Emek HaMaayanot Half Marathon, which is the Israeli National Championship." Participant I, a high-level official from the Israeli Paralympic Committee recalled that when the political situation was better, there were joint activities between Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians. Participant I said,

In better times during the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, I still participated in that, there was an event for peace that the nephew of the King of Jordan,

Husain, he was the head of the National Paralympic Committee of Jordan.

At that time and we did something like a triathlon, cycling, running and swimming from Eilat, Akaba with Palestinians, Israelis, Jordanians, and such. But that was many years ago.

The example of Jordan shows that when there is a respected peace treaty and the political climate allows it, there can be collaborations between the countries through sports and that Israeli sports organizations can serve as the mediators, organizing the events.

Other Muslim and Arabic Countries. During the interviews the participants mentioned some incidents with other Muslim or Arabic countries from around the world that were too eclectic to hold up as separated categories. With that said, the incidents shed light on several issues that impact the way Israeli sports organizations use sport for public diplomacy and nation branding purposes. Malaysia for example was mentioned several times as a Muslim country that did not grant entry visas to Israeli athletes. Another issue that came up was Arabic and Muslim countries refusing to invite Israeli sports organizations to participate in the Mediterranean Games (Reiche, 2018). Participant D, from the Israeli Sailing Association explained,

There are regional games in the world. We belong in the Mediterranean Games. We are not invited at all. This is not a very important competition, but this is a matter of principal. I started my international activities this year and started as a member in the regional games. When we went over

the list I got up and said that I want that in the protocol it will be written that Israel is still not invited to the Mediterranean Games.

Participant J, from the Israeli Athletics Association adds that members of North African Countries object having Israelis competing in these regional competitions.

Participant J said,

I can tell you that we have a big problem with them because we are officially members of the Mediterranean Countries Association in athletics, Officially there are many competitions that this organization holds and it does not invite us, because among that are Algeria, and Tunisia that refuse to hear about Israel participating so the organizers don't even invite us. So we don't even know that a competition like that is held.

Regarding Algeria, Participant I from the Paralympic Committee recalled an incident in the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro that the Algerian Goalball National Team did not show up to the games against the United States and Israel (BBC News, 2016). Participant I described the incident with the Algerian Women's Goalball Team in the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro:

Here [in the Rio Paralympic Games] it was a group stage and there were several games in a group, including against the United States and Israel. They [the Algerian team] did not show up and were not in the village. Nobody knew what was going on with them. They received technical losses. Suddenly, the day after they did not show up to the first two games

[against the United States and Israel], they showed up to their third game and said they missed their flights here and there.

According to Participant I, the Paralympic Committee of Israel complained about the Algerians. The participant said, “There was a feeling it was washed up at the end. They received a warning that this is the last time this can happen, but they did not receive a punishment beyond the technical losses.”

On the other hand, because there are Jewish populations in some of the North-African countries, there are some unique relations with them that do not happen with other Muslim or Arabic countries, such as participation in the Maccabiah Games. For example, in the 2017 Maccabiah Games there was a delegation from Morocco. According to Participant G, a high-level official in Maccabiah World Union and in the Organizing Committee of the 2017 Maccabiah Games, having a Moroccan delegation added flavor to the Games, but it also required special permission from the severing. Participant G explained,

So we invite every Jewish community out there to take part in the Games.

Even in Morocco, for them to march in the opening ceremony with the Moroccan flag, they needed permission from the king or the government there. And we got it. They got that permission. Meaning, if we could bring here the Jews of Teheran to participate in the Maccabiah and to march in the Opening Ceremony with the permission of Ahmadinejad or someone from his behalf, of course we will be happy with that. It adds flavor to the

games. Let's face the truth, the Moroccan flag, the Turkish less, although maybe now a bit more, but that is something that we are happy about.

These examples are important as they shed light on more obstacles that Israeli sports associations face internationally, even in countries from Africa or Asia who refuse to include Israel in Regional Games or cause issues when hosting sports events. On the other hand, there are some opportunities, pending on the political climate. Participants gave other positive examples of friendly relations in conferences with delegates from Pakistan or even Syria.

BDS Movement. The Boycotts, Divestment, Sanctions Movement (BDS), is a Pro-Palestinian international movement calling for sanctions against Israel (BDS, 2018). Unlike previous examples, this is not a country or a state with a territory, but a global movement posing a strategic threat to Israel. Several participants addressed the BDS Movement, as taking part in Anti-Israeli activities such as protests, Pro-Palestinian support or supporting sanctions against Israel. Participant K, from the Israeli Football Association, discussed how BDS supported the Palestinian campaign to exclude Israel from FIFA. Participant K said that “there is no doubt that all these organizations came to life and were part of that struggle.”

According to Participant G from the Maccabiah Movement, the organization was chosen by the Israeli government to lead Anti-BDS programs. Participant G explained,

We hold dozens, dozens of seminars in the world especially about BDS.

We manage to reach young people, which are where everyone is trying to get to, and change opinions about the State of Israel. Many times Jews

have opinions that are distancing a bit from Judaism and from the State of Israel. Suddenly we manage through different seminars, different trainings, to change their opinions.

The category of BDS is important as it signifies a global strategic struggle about the perception of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. This is not a question of visas or security or competing with or without a flag. This is a strategic challenge that Israel is facing that does not have specific boundaries.

Theme 2: Hosting Sports Events

Hosting sports events embody many diplomatic and branding opportunities (Arning, 2013; Preuss, 2015). I discussed some examples in the theoretical framework, under Culture and Sports Diplomacy. Israeli governmental ministries also addressed the importance of hosting sports events in Israel. According to participant Z, a high-level official in the Israeli Sports Administration: “We are investing special budgets in hosting sport events in the country. We make sure that the events we host are organized in the highest level.” Participant Y from the Ministry of Tourism said,

Sport helps us to normalize the message of Israel. Israel is perceived as a destination for people who come for religious purposes or in certain places as a dangerous destination. Sport events are not held in a place that is dangerous. So that helps us a lot to normalize Israel.

By hosting high-level sport events top level athletes and administrators are exposed to the country and expose it to their followers, tourists come and contribute to

local economy and international media exposes the country to millions of viewers. These issues and more were reflected in the words of the participants during the interviews.

Impact on Tourism and Economy. Almost all participant discussed how hosting sports events in Israel helps Israeli tourism and as a result has some positive impact on Israel's economy. One of the sports associations that hosted the most international competitions in the last years was the Israeli Swimming Association that hosted the Short Course European Championship, the Youth European Championship in Swimming and European competitions in synchronized swimming and open water swimming. Participant B from the Israeli Swimming Association explained the impact of hosting sport events in Israel:

This has impact on the economy, on the micro-economy. It impacts the macro-economy, because once there is an event that attracts many tourists it generates money for restaurants and taxi drivers and shop owners, and malls. Because people spend more money, and to the sites more money and that creates a circle of revenues in a scale that we can measure. An average tourist that comes for a week spends approximately 1,300 Euros per person.

Participants talked about impact on local businesses, on the periphery, and about showing the country and tours to different cities and locations. However, most Israeli sports organizations do not host professional sports competitions that bring dozens of thousands of tourists, thus their financial impact on the State of Israel is limited. To put

things in proportions, most of the organizations that discussed hosting sports events, talked about a few hundred participants and at times a few thousand tourists at best.

The exception is the Maccabiah Games. According to Participant G from the World Maccabiah Union and the Organizing Committee of the Maccabiah Games, 30,000 people come to Israel because of the Maccabiah leaving a significant financial impact: “300 million shekels were spent here during the Maccabiah.” 300 million shekels (approximately 88.5 million dollars³) is a significant revenue source for the State of Israel that invested only 28 million shekels (approximately 8.25 million dollars) of public money in the organization of the games. Participant G explained the significance:

If the Ministry of Tourism comes out with a campaign today about tourist number 3 million who came to Israel today, it is not a coincidence that this happened during a Maccabiah year. The Maccabiah has a big part in that achievement. The Jewish world is usually established. Beyond the thousands of beds, during the Maccabiah we provided bottles of water, transportation, lots of employment for companies in the periphery.

These examples are important to understand that the sports organizations that regulate professional sports in Israel try to host international events and understand their financial potential in sports tourism, but their impact is limited. However, the Maccabiah Games brings a significant amount of tourists who stay in Israel, spend over 10 times more than the public money that is invested in the games, play an important role in Israel’s economy, and in the branding of the country to Jews in the Diaspora.

³ Unless specified otherwise, all the currencies in this dissertations mentioning dollars refer to United States dollars.

History and Culture. Israeli sports organizations are very much aware that hosting sports events brings opportunities to showcase Israel to participants and tourists. Almost every sport organization explained that at least once during the tournament the organization helped with tours to Jerusalem or Nazareth whether having a bus to take the participants or with subsidized costs. According to participant B from the Israeli Swimming Association:

We organized them a trip to Jerusalem. We organized a trip to Nazareth to all the executives, directors, chairmen, CEOs and their wives. We organized a day trip for them. Obviously most of them are Christians, so to connect them and show them how much this land, the Holy Land, the Holy Bible, this country is sacred for everyone.

The will of the participants is something that also came up several times during the interviews. Some participants prefer to visit historical and religious places such as Jerusalem and Nazareth, some prefer to spend time on the beaches of Tel-Aviv or to go to the Dead Sea, and some just don't have time to travel. Participant F from the Israeli Volleyball Association gave an example of a senior official from Portugal who asked to be placed in Israel so he will have a chance to visit religious places. The participant said: "We took him on a tour to Jerusalem and we guided the tour guide to do the Via Dolorosa as it was clear to us that it's important for him." The participant said that the organization tries to accommodate the needs of the preferences of the visiting teams. For example, a youth volleyball team from Belgium preferred to visit the beaches of Tel-Aviv, so the Israeli Volleyball Association "organized a bus to take them on a fun day in Tel-Aviv."

Yet with some organizations the tours and activities organized for the participants are not just to expose the country, but have Zionist, political, cultural or historical messages. The Israeli Football Association, for example, holds every winter a youth tournament. The German Youth Team often comes to participate in the tournament and is often taken to Yad VaShem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem. According to Participant K from the Israeli Football Association:

We have a winter tournament that is held here for dozens of years where national teams come from abroad, youth. I can tell you that whenever Germany comes here they always visit Yad VaShem. So when they come here it's not just focusing on football but on other things. We see that. We have very strong relations with the German Association in that aspect. And this is certainly the place where we see ourselves not only in the football activities but also in broader activity.

Another way of how Israeli sports organizations use sport events to showcase Israeli history and culture is through ceremonies or holding different events that showcase Israeli music or Israeli food. In 2016, Israel hosted the European Championship in Rhythmic Gymnastics. According to Participant A, a high-level official in the Israeli Gymnastics Federation, the federation used the closing ceremony of a women-dominated competition as an opportunity to showcase the history of strong Israeli women. Participant A explained,

You keep taking me back to the European Championship in Holon. We invested a lot in the closing ceremony. There was a theme, a very nice

production of an unforgettable closing ceremony in these levels. It started with Adam and Eve, and went through Israeli history in the theme of strong women: If it's Golda Meir⁴, Lea Goldberg. They had women empowerment. The ceremony was in the theme of women empowerment. Even in the Championship's video. We are in women's sports, and this is the State of Israel, women in the army. We have very few opportunities to showcase that ad we usually focus on here and now, but this was a great opportunity to show someone like Eda Yonath who appeared in our opening video. Not many people will recognize, but you know, whoever goes a bit deeper, there is respect to Israeli creators.

Of course the organization that puts the most emphasis on history and culture while hosting sport events is The Maccabiah. The Maccabiah organization of course uses the games to expose the participants, their families and the tourists to Israeli history and culture. According to Participant G from the organization, the 2017 Maccabiah Games focused on 50 years to the unification of Jerusalem and started the celebrations for Israel's 70th year of independence. During the games there were all sorts of cultural and historical activities that connected the participants to the history of Israel, to Zionism and to modern Israel. Moreover, the larger delegations could even go to a Pre-Camp such as "Israel Connect" (Maccabi USA, 2018) where as a delegation they visit some of the main

⁴ Golda Meir, Lea Goldberg and Ada Yoanth are example of three influential Israeli women. Golda Meir was the first female Prime Minister of Israel, between 1969 and 1974 (Pogrebin, 2009). Lea Goldberg was an Israeli author and poet who shaped the Hebrew language and Israeli culture (Harel, 2009). Professor Ada Yonath is an Israeli biochemist and a Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry in 2009 (Nobel Media AB, 2014).

tourism attractions, learn more about Israeli culture, Judaism and even sports history of Israel and Jewish people. Participant G explained,

OK, the larger delegations don't come here only for the 14 days of the competitions, but they usually come three, four and the Americans even five or six days prior to Israel Connect or to the pre-camp of the Maccabiah. We help them with the organization of this thing. This cost extra on top of the Maccabiah, there is an extra payment, each one according to their demands. In effect, this is the delegation's time as a delegation. The delegation of the United States on the first day of the Maccabiah is spread around to the countless disciplines, to many cities. Here they start to work as the United States delegation. Everyone [goes] to the Western Wall, everyone to Masada, everyone to the Dead Sea, in between they practice. They do some training preparations in sport. And that is the place where they are usually more exposed to the history of the country.

These examples show the importance Israeli sports organization put on showcasing Israeli history and culture to participants and tourists while hosting sport events. Sports organizations in Israel understand that there are sites in Israel that have significant historical, cultural and religious meaning and try to provide opportunities to visit the sites and have a memorable experience. In some cases, there is a social or political goal behind the visit, not only to bring the participant back as a tourist but also to

educate, to make or strengthen connections or shape the image of the country in the eyes and minds of the participants.

Continental and World Events. Most of the international competitions that Israeli sports organizations host, are under the European Sports Federations. Moreover, in the larger sports federations, Israel rarely hosts the most important competition that even the European Federation has to offer. Among the main international competitions that Israel hosted and participants talked about were The European Short-Course Swimming Championship in 2015, the 2013 UEFA U21 European Championship in football, the 2016 European Championship in Rhythmic Gymnastics, and a group stage in the 2017 FIBA EuroBasket, the European championship in basketball (Dart, 2013; FIBA Eurobasket, 2018; Netanya 2015. 2018; UEG, 2018). There were other European championships in sailing, several annual European competitions that are not European championships and various European championships for youth in different sports or some small events with a few other countries. The participants usually talked very proudly on hosting these events. Participant A from the Gymnastics Association said,

In the European Championship in 2016 we hosted 600 participants in a gymnastics discipline that brought 3,000 spectators, many of them tourists coming from abroad. I think sports created for them an experience and they must have travelled while they were staying here.

However, according to the participants, when it comes to world championships, especially in the bigger sports that bring more tourists, they require larger facilities and involves participants not only from Europe but from Arabic and Muslim countries, and

Israeli sports organizations very rarely manage to host these kinds of competitions. Most participants said that while they feel comfortable bidding for European competitions, when it comes to world competitions members from Arabic and Muslim countries will not vote for Israel and when Israel does get a world competition either in smaller associations such as sailing or in youth competitions, members of those states do not come to compete. According to participant K from the Football Association this is not going to change in the foreseeable future:

I believe that until the political situation will not change drastically, and parallel to that the state will have the resources, we will not host tournaments in the magnitude of the World Cup or the Euro. That will not happen in the near future. I also don't see that happening in the distant future.

One international competition that did become a tradition in Israel is the Tiberius Marathon, held by the Israeli Athletics Association (Sea of Galilee Marathon, 2018). According to Participant J from the Athletics Association, the Tiberius Marathon is unique because it is held in the winter and that the Israeli weather enables to hold a marathon while in most of the world the weather makes it impossible. Moreover, the prize money of the marathon is \$100,000 which attract high quality runners and that the course is considered fast. With that said, the Tiberius Marathon still falls short from the Dubai Marathon where the prize money is \$250,000 and attracts the elite of the elite. According to Participant J, in 2012 the Tiberius Marathon “was the 15th fastest marathon

that year, which is very respectable considering that there are days when 3-4 marathons are held around the world.”

Other events that Israel hosted were different congresses and conferences or different roles that Israeli sports organizations had while other agencies hosted international delegations. Some participant said that through international conferences they take high-level official to tour the country. Participant I from the National Paralympic Committee of Israel discussed another way of showcasing different sides of Israel by having delegations from abroad experiencing sports for people with disabilities. Participant I gave examples of collaborations with delegations from Japan, Germany and South and Central America. The participant said that “this is a very emotional experience and this is part visiting the country”. According to the participant from the Paralympic Committee,

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs approached us to host them. We are familiarizing them with the National Paralympic Committee, we organize a tour for them in Beit HaLochem, and we give them an experience on wheel-chairs which is a special experience. They play [wheelchair] basketball.

The Maccabiah Games is of course the biggest sport event that Israel hosts bringing thousands of participants to Israel from almost 80 countries. According to participant G from the Maccabiah Movement:

The main event of the movement and of the organization is the Maccabiah every four years. The first Maccabiah was in 1932, the next was in 1935

and then the only break that happened from then until today was during World War II and the Holocaust, and it resumed again in 1950. Since then it moved to be every four years and this year we celebrated the largest Maccabiah,...[with] almost 10,000 participants, athletes, officials, coaches, managers, plus 20,000 tourists who came following the delegation and that is actually the Jewish Olympics.

These examples show that Israel's ability to host sport events is limited mostly to European Competitions and in most sports, not even the most important European competitions. Israeli sports organizations try to maximize their potential in hosting and bidding for competitions. Israeli sports organizations are also involved in hosting delegations and showcasing different sides of Israel through smaller events. Some Israeli sports associations mentioned potential bidding again to host competitions that were given to other countries or bidding for future competitions, but at this point of time the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, the World Championship in Athletics and the World Championship in Swimming are beyond the political and financial capabilities of Israel. With the exception of the Maccabiah Games, that of course means that the potential of Israeli sports organizations to use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy is limited to smaller events.

Level of Hospitality. Israeli sports organizations repeatedly emphasized their dedication of being good hosts and the compliments they received from participants and from the international organizations after hosting a successful competition. According to

Participant E from the Judo Association, “We as Israelis know how to organize competitions at a very, very high level.” Participant E explained the reasons as follows:

First, because we are professionals. Second, we give our heart and soul.

Third, we know that in the end,—whether it is consciously or subconsciously, we represent something that is beyond [organizing a sports competition]. It’s not a sport event that we organize, it’s something beyond that we represent.

Participants repeatedly talked about the high service level of the hotels, the organizations of the competition, the security level and also about the dedication to show participants a good time through parties, other social events or just by engaging with Israeli organizers. Participant F from the volleyball association said they want the participants to have the “best time.” The member of the Athletics Association mentioned a memorable closing party and the Judo representative said that people enjoy being with Israelis.

The examples of the emphasis on the level of hosting show that Israeli sports organizations see their roles not only as sports administrators but also as good hosts who want to leave a good impression of the organization and of the country. Or like Participant E said, “They laugh because it is fun for them to be here. You understand, every game ends with a bottle of Arak⁵.”

Influencers and New Ambassadors. Hosting sport events, taking participants on tours around the country and the emphasis on hospitality, have a purpose of not only making sure that participants enjoy their stay, but that they will become ambassadors of

⁵ Arak is an alcoholic anise-flavored liqueur popular in the Middle East (Fayed, 2017).

Israel and expose Israeli to their followers and fans. As Participant B from the Swimming Association said, “think of how many followers each swimmer has and if they had a good experience what kind of media exposure comes out of it.”

Examples given by participants from sports organizations included famous former football players such as Didier Drogba, Graham Souness and Kenny Dalglish, swimming champions Federica Pellegrini, Robert Emmiyan in athletics, high-level executives in the world of sports and others. However, the organization that is the most active in creating ambassadors is the Maccabiah World Union. According to Participant G from the Maccabiah, not only every participant is a potential ambassador of Israel, but every Games the organization tries to bring the best Jewish athletes in the world to Israel and that they leave as ambassadors. Recent examples included American gymnastics star Aly Raisman, Gold Medalists in swimming Anthony Ervin, and Lenny Krayzelburg, who came to Israel during different Maccabiah Games. Participant G explained,

Anthony Ervin became today our best ambassador, of the Maccabiah. Not because we pay him. We don't pay him anything. He came, he was respected here. Really, I am telling you, respect that he deserves, that he earned, and [he] became an ambassador. Aly became an ambassador.

Lenny and really almost every one of the Olympic medalists who comes here go through an empowering experience.

As public relations and the image of the organization and of the country are so important, there are extreme situations when the high-level profile of the influencing athlete might cause the Israeli organization to make a policy change. For example, while

the Maccabiah Games are designed for Jewish participants and non-Jewish participants who are Israeli citizens, in the 2017 Maccabiah Games one of the participants from Brazil was the son of football legend Ronaldo, who was not Jewish. Participant G from the Maccabiah explained that it was not the Maccabiah Organization that made the decision but there are cases where the damage of excluding a potential influencer might be bigger than the damage of having a non-Jewish athlete competing. Participant G explained the specific situation with the son of Ronaldo and that the organization needs to evaluate their policies:

The Maccabiah, is the Jewish Olympics. The case of Ronaldo comes up and will come up in our next congress [of Maccabi World Union] about including Jews, guys that are not Jewish in the games. The Maccabiah is for Jews only. That [the inclusion of Ronaldo's son] happened under the table instead of above the table. Ronaldo's son has been a member in Club Hebraica in Sao Paulo, an integral part of their football team. He is not Jewish, we all understand that.

According to the Participant from the Maccabiah Movement, Ronaldo is financially supporting the Jewish club in Sao Paulo, and not allowing his son to participate in the Maccabiah Games could have caused negative publicity. Participant G said that the Maccabiah Movement should reconsider some of their policies. Participant G explained:

It is enough that he [Ronaldo] will tweet that his son is not taken to the Jewish Games because he is not Jewish... Maccabi Brazil took on

themselves the decision to include him [Ronaldo's son], unfortunately, without consulting with us as the organizing committee. This story came up very fast. At the next congress [of Maccabi World Union] we will discuss all these issues. There will be some sort of an Exceptions Committee and we will probably understand that in cases where there are much more pros than cons, we would probably approve a case such as Ronaldo, instead of having all his followers cursing us and we will find ourselves under attack for not allowing an athlete who is not Jewish to take part.

These examples show that Israeli sports organizations are oriented towards making participants, executives, and high profile influencers in the world of sports ambassadors of the country after visiting Israel. Israeli sports organizations see high importance in leaving a good impression on influencers who have fans and followers, even at the cost of changing the organization's policies.

Different Sides of Israel. Several participants talked about how visiting Israel changed the participants' perception of the country and how the organizations managed to show the participants different sides of Israel. According to Participant C from the Israeli Basketball Association "we show them how Tel-Aviv is a normal city." Participants said that by visiting Israel foreign delegates saw how developed Israel is, that there is no Apartheid here and that generally life is normal in Israel and people compete in sport and it is not only wars and what they see in the news. Participant F from the Israeli Volleyball Association explained,

I host here people who come for the first time, and you hear sentences for example: “I was sure that everything here is a desert and you ride camels.”

I was asked here questions like: “Do you have a currency or is there barter?” You know, at the end, we think we are the center of the world because international media deals a lot with what is going on in Israel, but there is a lot of lack of knowledge about what is this country, how it looks like and the how Western this country is.

Normalizing Israel and showing advanced sides of the country are examples of how Israeli sport organizations try or manage to show an image of Israel, that serves Israel’s diplomacy and nation branding.

Exposure through International Media. One of the results of hosting international sports events is bringing international media to Israel. Participants from the Israeli Swimming Association that hosted the European Short Course Swimming Championship and from the Israeli Football Association that hosted the UEFA U21 European Championship, emphasized the exposure the country got being broadcasted to global audiences. According to Participant K from the Football Association:

The final was played in Jerusalem, broadcasted to over 150 countries, [to] tens of millions watched it around the world. And they see that in Israel there are not just wars and political problems, but also football. That was a good opportunity to show other sides of Israel and this is our place as a Football Association to come and say: “Come and see what is here.”

Moreover, in cases when the competition is broadcasted in major international networks, a clip about Israel is being played before every broadcast. For example, Participant B from the Swimming Association discussed the coverage of the European Championship that was broadcasted by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU):

There was a lot of international media. It was broadcasted live on EBU, 270 viewers. When you open the evening news here, it's not the United States. When you open the evening news which is TV Prime Time, 30 percent average ratings, is what? 1-1.5 million? 270 million! This is an unprecedented exposure that the State of Israel received. The result of such exposure is first of all [the exposure of] the opening clip that I put "Land of Creation" that exposes all the creativity in the country.

Other participants discussed more modest coverage, either of smaller international media organizations who come to Israel to cover smaller competitions, and at several times international media organizations that focus on unique angles about Israeli sports. One example was an article in the New York Times that focused on football team Hapoel Beer Sheva that helps to bloom the desert. Another example was given by Participant J from the Israeli Athletics Association about an article that focused on top three Israeli athletes who immigrated to Israel because they fell in love with Israelis.

Some participants discussed the roles of international media, not necessarily in the context of hosting sport events, but in the way Israeli sports were exposed in the news. Participant D from the Israeli Sailing Association said that when Israeli athletes were refused entry visas to Muslim countries, she managed to raise the issue and protest it,

which got the attention of international media. Participant D said, “I must positively attribute to the State of Israel that we raised noise in media all over the world. I was interviewed to British TV through Skype and to our satisfaction, many countries in the world came and supported us and there are no more competitions in Muslim countries.”

Participant H from NOCIL, talked about the importance of international media covering Gal Friedman winning Israel’s first Olympic Gold Medal in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. As a result of the positive coverage on American TV networks, American-Jewish billionaire Sydney Frank donated 12 million dollars to the NOCIL. Participant H recalled,

The international media and especially the American media gave it [Israel winning a first Olympic Gold Medal] a huge exposure. This is actually the importance of media in the world. It is the number one factor and he saw what it did. He saw what it did in Israel.

Israeli sports organizations understand the importance of international media exposing Israel to the world. When hosting competitions that are broadcasted to millions of viewers, clips of Israel are being broadcasted showing attractive sides of the country. Sports organizations also understand the importance of having international media covering unique angles of Israeli sports, again, showing different sides of the country. Some participants also discussed other aspects of international media, such as platform to protest political interferences against the organization or as platforms to expose athletic achievements. These all have an impact on the international image of Israel.

Facilities Issues. Almost all the participants complained about the lack of top level facilities in Israel that prevent them from hosting higher level sport events which would expose the country to larger audiences. Participants complained about not having enough athletic facilities, not having enough budgets to build the facilities, facilities not meeting international regulations, and lack of collaborations with governmental ministries and municipalities. Participant J for example, from the Israeli Athletics Association, complained that in the only athletics stadium in Israel that had a training stadium, the training stadium was demolished for a velodrome, a cycling arena, to be built instead. According to participant J, “they took the training stadium out of the only [athletics] stadium in the country that had an attached training stadium and they build a velodrome on it.” The participant emphasized that a training stadium is a necessity for hosting international competitions and that now, the organization’s hosting options are much more limited.

On the other hand, several participants praised the quality of existing facilities in Israel. Examples of facilities in Israel that participants talked about positively were the swimming pool at Wingate Institute that was complimented by some of the participants and Gordon Beach in Tel-Aviv that some participants referred to as an attractive location to host international competitions in sailing or beach volleyball. Participant C from the Israeli Basketball Association said that the facilities in Israel are better the facilities that Israeli basketball teams use when competing in some other countries. According to Participant C,

Even if it sounds like they aren't, in Israel the facilities are great today. Especially compared to other places you are hosted at. Of course when you go to France and to Italy the facilities are better, but we travel usually to the east, Eastern Europe, and we travel a lot to Eastern Europe. And today some of them are worse.

The lack of facilities in Israel, does not only prevent Israeli sports associations to bid for hosting international competitions, but also push Israeli athletes to leave Israel and train abroad. For example, to be able to represent Israel in a competitive way in the Winter Olympic Games, figures skaters need to train in a facility in New Jersey, because the existing facilities are smaller than the required ones by the international federation. The interviews took place during December 2017, while the Israeli delegation was preparing for the 2018 Winter Olympic Games. The gathering of the delegation was at the figure skating facility in Holon, which although is the center of figure skating in Israel, the rink is too small to host international competitions. While the sport is gaining popularity, because the facilities do not meet international regulations, for Israeli athletes to be competitive, they have to move abroad and train outside the country. According to Participant H from the National Olympic Committee, this needs to change:

The state needs to build a bigger arena here, next by, because we aim to bring the center of gravity here. It is clear that it can't be in New Jersey forever. I don't like it. I think it needs to be here, but there needs to be conditions. If there won't be conditions...

The examples of the facilities explain that it is not only because of the Israeli-Arabic dispute, political reasons or security reasons that Israel does not manage to host mega sport events in the country. Almost all participants complained in one way or another about the level of athletic facilities, the shortage of athletic facilities or the lack of support and collaboration with sports authorities. While some participants pointed out positive sides about existing facilities or future opportunities, the current situation limits Israel's ability to host sport events that will expose the country to larger audiences.

The Maccabiah Games. There is an ongoing discussion in Israel that was reflected through the participants whether the Maccabiah Games are a sport event or not. Several participants referred to the games as a touristic or Zionist tool, rather than a sports competition and there is a certain amount of cynicism from the Israeli public. Most participants said that their organizations are involved with the Maccabiah Games, as they are the ones responsible for organizing competitions in their sports, including sports for people with disabilities.

Moreover, some participants acknowledged that while the level of the competition does not meet the standards of international competitions such as European Championships, World Championships and of course the Olympic Games, for most of the participants of the Maccabiah Games, these games will be the highest level of competition they will face in their athletic careers. The Israeli Gymnastics Association for example, connects the Israeli National Championship with the gymnastics competition in the Maccabiah Games, to increase the value of the games. Some other benefits could be establishing working relations or finding talented athletes that have the

potential to immigrate to Israel through the Shvut Law. When Jewish people from the Diaspora immigrate to Israel, they make “Aliyah”. According to Participant A from the Israeli Gymnastics Federation,

It is very clear to everyone that in a Maccabiah year, the National Championship will be in the Maccabiah. This is an opportunity to compete with people from abroad, to compete with athletes, to bring athletes. By the way, in the past one gymnast made Aliyah to Israel because of the Maccabiah. This is an opportunity to expose new gymnasts, to bring here stars that in their countries... a gymnast from Russia that was not able to make the Russian team but in Israel he will be an Israeli National Team member.

According to Participant G from the Maccabiah Movement “Maccabi World Union is the largest Zionist Jewish organization in the world. We estimate the movement has about 450,000 members in 60 active countries.” Participant J explained that sport is the tool that the movement is using to connect Jewish Communities to the State of Israel. Participant G said that “the most powerful statement of the movement is physically bringing the Jews of the Diaspora to Israel. To make them better ambassadors.”

According to Participant G, “What we are doing a lot is to bring the Jews of the Diaspora closer to Israel by all means.” Yet, even with the critics about the level of the competitions, hosting a quadrennial sport event with thousands of participants, from

dozens of countries in 40 disciplines in the same country, is not something that countries do. Participant G noted,

If I go through 40 disciplines and categories, even with the level and with the level of organization by the association and from the athletic side, and in the international regulations side, I can pretty proudly mark a big check on a complicated project.

According to the participant from the Maccabiah Movement, organizing the Maccabiah Games is even more complicated than organizing the Olympic Games. The participant said, “it is complicated period. It is complicated like no other. I wish for us, with a crew like that to organize Olympic Games. We are doing that with one eye tied.” The Maccabiah Games are a unique event for Israel and to Israel, bringing thousands of people to Israel to compete every four years and dozens of thousands of tourists that make an impact on Israel’s economy. While there are approximately 40 sports disciplines, the goals of the Maccabiah movement and of the games are strongly related to improving Israel’s image and to public diplomacy and nation branding. While almost all the participants in this study said that their sports associations, federations and committees are involved with Maccabiah Games, at least some of them are still not sure that the Maccabiah Games are a sport event.

Theme 3: Representation

Representing the country embodies various diplomatic and branding opportunities and influences national identity which has both internal and external implications for a

countries' soft power (Hobsbawn, 1992; Gleaves, & Llewellyn, 2014; Nye, 2014). I discuss several of those implications during the theoretical framework, under Culture and Sports Diplomacy. Participants both from sports organizations and from governmental agencies discussed the importance of improving achievements for the State of Israel to be able to better use sports for public diplomacy and nation branding purposes. Participant X from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that like the success of Israeli high-tech companies brought global interest in Israel technologies, the exposure of Israel through sports depends on achievement. Participant X explained,

Let's start by improving the achievements of Israeli sports and then we will have much more to sell abroad. I think that is the main problem. Like in high-tech, once we have high-tech that really operates in a global level then obviously there is not just pull but also push. Meaning, the world is interested in getting to know Israeli high-tech. I wish we will get to that situation in global sports that people from abroad will want to know what is happening in Israel that is growing such sports giants and then I will have something to sell.

Participant Z from the Israeli sports administration talked about various factors where representation in sports impacts Israel's image, such as Israeli character, having Israeli symbols shown across the world and others. Yet the ability to showcase Israel and reposition Israel through sports depends on the ability of Israeli sports organizations to succeed in competitions. Participant Z said,

The only thing that I think will catch and will change Israel's status are much higher achievements. The more we will get to the podium, and this is what we should strive to, without being shy. In the Olympic Games we need to reach four to six medals and not to settle for one to two, and the same with World Championships and European Championships. The more our anthem will be played, the more we will reach the podium and the flag will be raised, there is no doubt it will be known that Israel is not just wars, it's also sports.

This theme captures different ways participants talked about the role sports organizations have in the representation of Israel and how it impact's the branding of Israel, Israel's public diplomacy that eventually shapes Israel's image. Categories in this theme include: The importance of winning, Israeli athletes as ambassadors, Israeli symbols, Israeli character, Commemoration, Diverse melting pot, Arabs in Israeli National Teams, Security issues, Products and sponsors, and the Military component.

Importance of Winning. Almost all the participants from sports organizations and from governmental agencies talked about how improving Israel's achievements in sports could lead to more coverage, more interest and more exposure of Israel, thus showing positive sides of the country. Or in the words of participant C from the Israeli Basketball Association that recently celebrated a silver medal in the U20 FIBA European Championship: "There is nothing like winning on the court for doing a good service for the country." The most significant example of an impact of an achievement was when

Gal Friedman won the first Israeli Olympic Gold Medal in Athens 2004. Participant H from the Olympic Committee recalled the impact of that gold medal in Israel and abroad:

Right after that, a dear Jew, Sidney Frank from the United States saw the winning of the gold medal and what kind of effect it had and also because it was the first time and the Israeli flag is raised in the most media exposed place in the most important event and the national anthem, “HaTikva” is played. This got his so emotional that he said, “I want more like these” and he donated 12 million dollars.

Israeli athletic achievements are modest, even for a country for its size. In over 60 years in the Olympic Movement, Israeli athletes have won nine medals and only one gold. The most popular sport in Israel is football, yet not only the Israeli National Team did not win the World Cup or the European Championship (the Euro), the Israeli National Team have yet to even qualified for the Euro and qualified only once to the World Cup in 1970 where it was knocked out after the group stage. According to Participant K from the Israeli Football Association, for football to have a significant impact on Israel’s image, the National Team and the clubs need to achieve better results. Participant K shared,

I think that eventually athletic success, professionally, will bring with it the positive exposure. Unfortunately since 1970 we have not been able to qualify to a major tournament. There is no doubt that once we will qualify to a big tournament, it will have an impact on advocacy and diplomacy.

Meaning, I do see the connection between professional success and exposure and to the diplomatic status, at least in the context of football.

Winning Olympic Medals also makes Israeli sport better known internationally. Participant D from the Israeli Sailing Association said “I walk proud with three Olympic Medals,” yet there are countries with many more. Since Yael Arad won the first Israeli Olympic medal in judo in 1992, Israeli athletes won eight more Olympic Medals in sailing, judo and rowing. Thus, even the relatively modest amount of medals that Israeli athletes have won were achieved in disciplines that are not the most central ones in the Olympic Games, like athletics, swimming or gymnastics. Participant B from the Israeli Swimming Association argued that the impact of winning a medal in a high profile sport such as swimming will be more significant than winning medals in judo or sailing, where Israel has been more successful. Participant B said,

Look, the amazing thing that happened because of the medals that judo won, and the same with sailing when they had good years, was the feeling of celebration here. The byproduct of that celebration is that judo classes were full. This is great. Imagine if we could do it in swimming. Imagine if we could do it in athletics.

The importance of winning and of improving Israeli achievements in sports was emphasized by almost all participants. There are understandings and even experiences where winning resulted in positive coverage of Israel and even future investments in Israeli sports. That said, these examples show that the participants also acknowledge that the achievements of their organizations were too modest to make substantial and consistent impact on the branding of Israel and on Israel’s public diplomacy.

Israeli Athletes as Ambassadors. Another topic that came up by several participants is the emphasis on the role of top level athletes representing the country through their achievements and values. Athletes that were mentioned included basketball player Omri Casspi who played in several NBA teams including the Golden State Warriors, triple-jumper Hanna Knyazyeva-Minenko who won a silver medal in the Athletics World Championship, football player Yossi Benayoun who played in top English clubs like Liverpool and other Israeli athletes who compete abroad or managed to sustain a long international career. Participant C from the Israeli Basketball Association discussed the importance of Omri Casspi both for the State of Israel and for Israeli basketball:

There is no doubt that Omri Casspi is a great thing for the State of Israel. He is doing a great service in the way that he is and also because of his character. He is very Zionist. Everyone who knows him, [Omri Casspi is] very Zionist, a great patriot. He is doing an amazing service for the state. He is doing an amazing service for Israeli basketball. Today we sell the national team through Omri when he comes. Today, in the new system it is a bit different, but when Omri comes there is a huge buzz around the national team. Omri is a great brand for that. We are in constant connection with him. He does activities. He, Omri, is a great thing for Israeli basketball.

Participant J from the Israeli Athletics Association discussed the impact of Hanna Knyazyeva-Minenko winning a silver medal in the 2015 World Championship in Beijing

and of high jumper Dimitry Kroyter winning a gold medal in the first Youth Olympic Games in Singapore in 2010. According to participant J: “they are sort of ambassadors that do the job without having a diplomatic certification.” Participant J explained how Israel’s image is manifested through them:

It is manifested through values of striving for excellence, in hard work that achievement come through hard work and not through rounding corners or taking shortcuts. It is manifested with many young Chinese kids coming to ask for her [Hanna Knyazyeva-Minenko] autograph. Once she wears the sweatshirt with the Israeli flag on it, it is reasonable to assume that some of the kids will remember that flag. Even if they won’t always know to say Israel, but they will remember that once someone with that flag gave them an autograph because she was one of the best athletes in the world in her field.

The top athletes mentioned being ambassadors, without being formally appointed by the State of Israel. However, there are cases where the state, and especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, uses Israeli athletes for public diplomacy and nation branding purposes. It is mostly common with top Paralympic athletes who are invited to lecture in front of different international audiences or even lead campaigns about the State of Israel (Israel MFA, 2013). Participant I from the National Paralympic Committee of Israel mentioned Moran Samuel, Pascal Berkovic and Noam Gershony as Paralympic athletes that are often used by the State of Israel for diplomatic purposes. Moran Samuel, a Paralympic medalist in rowing who is paralyzed in her lower body, has been in

different campaigns by the Israeli Foreign Ministry. According to Participant I: “Moran was an envoy in Australia. There are organizations that use these guys, especially Moran, Pascal and Noam, to try and raise money.”

Another Paralympic athlete who is used for diplomatic and branding purposes is Noam Gershony, a former helicopter pilot that was severely injured in the second Lebanon War in 2006, and won a gold medal in wheelchair Tennis in the 2012 Paralympic Games. The narrative of the Israeli soldier captivates international audiences and serves public diplomacy purposes of the different Israeli and Jewish bodies. According to Participant I,

They [Israeli and Jewish organizations] leveraged it, yes. Even with promotional videos. Every promotional video ends with Noam Gershony crying with the gold medal. This includes fundraising. By the way, Noam Gershony practices this field of fundraising. He helps. Apropos fundraising for the country. This is an example. Noam today, as an independent freelance, helps organizations such as the Jewish Agency, Kakal, and The Zahal Disabled Veterans Association, to raise money through his lectures abroad.

There were mixed reactions by participants regarding the option of having the Ministry of Foreign Affairs using the organizations for foreign policy, public diplomacy or political purposes. Although most participants emphasized that they focus on the athletics side and do not want political interference, some participants said there could be better use of their athletes to expose Israel and that some ambassadorial programs might

be welcomed. The conflicting thoughts were well reflected through Participant A from the Israeli Gymnastics Association:

I think that if there was a program of young ambassadors, by the Israeli Sports Ministry, to organize for them three to four meetings with someone who specializes in public relations, with standing in front of a crowd, delivering messages, this could have been leveraged. But again, as I am saying that, it sits in my head, in the back of my head, that maybe this is wrong. Maybe we should not mix this arena.

On the other hand, there are also examples raised by participants where Israeli sports were accused of racism. Participant K from the Israeli Football Association mentioned that one of the reasons why the Palestinian Football Associations demanded to exclude the Israeli Football Association from FIFA was because of manifestation of racism in Israeli football. One of the clubs that has been accused of racism is Beitar Jerusalem for not singing Israeli-Arab players and for racist chants by the fans (Haaretz, 2017). Participant K explained that the club has been sanctioned several times, but that institutional racism in the club is hard to prove:

Beitar Jerusalem is one of the clubs that were sanctioned the most here at the Israeli Football Association up until reduction of points. I don't know many other places in the world where the Football Association deducts points for racist chants. Meaning, I can tell you that in the last seasons the statistics show that very strong actions were taken against that club. I can

also say that in the lately there is some change in their attitude, in their approach, to racism by their fans.

Almost all the participants discussed the ambassadorial roles of athletes from their organizations or at least their potential to be such. In most cases it is the athlete who decides how to represent the State of Israel and in what manner. There are several organizations where the State of Israel and different Jewish bodies use the athletes as lecturers or even as envoys or fundraisers in Israel's branding and diplomatic efforts. The case of Beitar Jerusalem and the Israeli Football Association shows that there are also negative impacts when Israeli teams or Israeli sports are associated with racism, does not only hurt Israeli society but also could give ammunition to organizations who would try to hurt Israel's image through excluding Israeli sports from international federations.

Israeli Symbols. Another manifestation of representation that the participants talked about was the use of Israeli symbols, especially the Israeli flag and the Israeli national anthem "HaTikva" which in Hebrew means "The Hope." Raising the flag, whether it is through pure participation or even better, through winning a medal, was mentioned by several participants. Participant G from the Maccabiah Movement recalled the 2015 European Maccabiah Games that were held in Berlin, Germany. The Maccabiah Movement holds continental games as well, and in 2015 the Opening Ceremony took place in the Olympiastadion in Berlin, the same stadium where Adolph Hitler and Nazi Germany hosted the 1936 Olympic Games. Participant G recalled that being in that stadium with Israeli symbols was very emotional and meaningful: "I can tell you that it

was real chills to be in the stadium, in that same damned stadium, to sing “HaTikva” with the Israeli flag raised high.”

At times Israeli sports organizations face a dilemma whether to compete in countries that force Israeli athletes to compete under the international federation rather than as representatives of Israel, without the Israeli flag and other Israeli symbols. When push comes to shove and Israeli organizations are forced to make that decision, the NOC of Israel instructs to compete no matter what. Participant H from the NOC explained,

...all these stories now with us showing up without a flag and without declaring the name of the country on our clothes. This is something very disturbing and upsetting. Of course we sent letters and we acted to minimize the damage, but the argument here was if to compete or not to compete and we guided [Israeli sports associations] unequivocally to compete. Because once we will not compete this will be a playing tool for those [countries] that really boycott.

Another factor that impacts visibility of Israeli symbols is security. Several participants said that because of security concerns Israeli athletes cannot wear uniforms. Participant D from the Sailing Association said, “Unfortunately in clothing we avoid having an Israeli flag. I am not sure what other associations do, but we avoid it.” When asked why, she explained, “These are the instructions of the Shin-Bet mostly. Because if there will be a flag, they will not allow them to go outside the competition. We are always with security.” The only places where the Israeli security services allow the organizations and the delegations to have Israeli flags showing are in the secured

stadium. Even in the Olympic Village, while other delegations hang their flags outside the windows of their accommodations, because of security concerns and because of the history of the terror attack in the 1972 Olympic Games, the Israeli delegation is not allowed to have Israeli symbols outside their residences.

The importance of showing Israeli symbols and especially raising the Israeli flag and playing the Israeli national anthem were mentioned multiple times by almost all the participants. The participants made clear connections between national pride, representation and the role of Israeli symbols as a way to normalize Israel. However, because the modest sportive achievements, political issues when competing in certain countries and security concerns by Israeli security forces, Israeli symbols are not always used, thus preventing branding and diplomatic opportunities that other countries have.

Israeli Character. Participants used a range of adjectives to describe Israeli character. The positive adjectives referred to being warm, fun to be with, adaptive, improvising and innovative and creative. The negative adjectives referred to being rude, loud, cynical, rounding corners and not very hard working. When it comes to the athletes though, several participants referred to liking the character of the athletes rather than the character of Israelis. Adjectives used to describe Israeli athletes included not giving up, hustle, fighting, and striving for excellence, well behaved, disciplined and representative. Several participants emphasized the importance of disciplinary behavior when going abroad, not to give the hosts any reasons why not to want to invite Israelis again. Participant F from the Volleyball Association gave a few examples how Israeli character reflects through the instructions to the athletes:

People are warm in the way they conduct themselves, friendly, not alienated. There is no such thing of not coming to a party that is organized for all the players. That's part of it. We are active on that matter. We always leave the locker room clean and organized. We never ask to be cleaned after us. The bus always returns like we got it. We pay in advance. There is no way we will get into different issues... and there are cases of not paying for the last night or leaving a hotel in a state of chaos. We don't have such things.

In terms of specific examples, Participant E from the Judo Association recalled the World Championship Final, that when Yarden Gerbi won her instinctive reaction was to make sure her opponent regained consciousness and only then celebrated becoming the champion of the world. Participant E said about Israeli character: "I think it can be seen in the attitude, OK? In Yarden's smile. What needs to be said more? If she chokes her opponent, that one has fainted, and she cares about her. Who needs more?"

Other examples of Israeli character referred to the coaches or descendants of the Russian Aliyah - a wave of immigration from the Russian Commonwealth Countries in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to several participants, the Russian Aliyah brought work ethics and professional knowledge that improved Israeli sports, especially in disciplines such as gymnastics, synchronized swimming or figure skating. Participant A from the Israeli Gymnastics Federation explained,

There is no doubt that the standards set here, and I don't want to sound racist, I think that there is much good in the Russian Aliyah. They brought

a lot of athletic qualities of excellence and hard work and things that are mush, to be an athlete. I think they created... A. Most of the coaches came from the Soviet Union and they rise the Sabra⁶ generation to the same values and the same hard work. Gymnastics is a sport that is very Sisyphean. It is very un-glamorous. You need to work very hard to be very good. And also not to be very good needs very hard work. I think that the Aliyah was very impactful. You see today, most of the gymnasts are Sabras, but they live and are very influenced in some way by the Soviet education. I wish it was like this in all sports. I think we would have reached many other achievements.

Overall participants described a positive image of Israeli athletes that represents positives sides of Israeli culture, leaving a good impression of Israelis abroad. On one hand the informalities in Israeli culture, the chutzpah, the creativeness and adaptability were mentioned positively. On the other hand, corner-rounding and rudeness were mentioned as well. Participant J from athletics summarized: "I don't like the Israeli character, but I love the character of the athletes."

Commemoration. The Munich Massacre and the commemoration of the 11 Israeli athletes, coaches and referees that were murdered in the terror attack during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, West Germany, has an immense impact on the representation of Israeli sports in Israel and abroad. Most participants in this study, though, said that their role in the commemoration sums up in sending representatives to ceremonies that the NOCIL is holding. As most participants in this study do not represent

⁶ The term Sabra refers to Jewish men and women who were born in the land of Israel (Nahshom, n.d.).

sports organizations that the Munich Victims belonged to, they play a more passive role in the commemoration of the victims. Even the Israeli Athletics Association that lost legendary coach Amitzur Shapira in the terror attack, said that they mostly follow the ceremonies held by the Olympic Committee. There is an annual race in the name of Amitzur Shapira, however it is not organized by the Israeli Athletics Association.

Participant J from the Israeli Athletics Association explained,

I can generally say that we, the Athletics Association, have a very big problem in the country to do what is called a race “in memory of.” You will see there are many races in Israel, many events that commemorate someone, but these are not events that the Israeli Athletics Association organizes.

As mentioned, the NOCIL is the Israeli sports organization that is the most active with the commemoration of the victims. The NOCIL holds ceremonies in Israel, in every Olympic Games and sends representatives to attend international ceremonies abroad. The Olympic Committee was also supportive of the demand for the IOC to officially commemorate the victims in every Olympic Games, however they give most of the credit to the families of the victims and especially to Ilana Romano and Ankie Spitzer who led that struggle. Participant H from the NOCIL discussed the improving relations between the families of the victims and the IOC after their loved ones were officially commemorated in the Olympic Village in Rio de Janeiro during the 2016 Olympic Games. Participant H said,

Every Israeli delegation that leaves goes through a lecture on that subject and we also always go through the monument and promise to continue their ways. Because for me, every time the Israeli flag is raised in the Olympic Games it is some sort of a will of the victims. Each and every one of us that represents the State of Israel in the Olympic Games, because it happened in the Olympic Games, needs to understand he continues their legacy. This is an issue that is very valuable to me. Abroad, we help Ankie's and Ilana's struggle. Although, I say it again, they deserve most of the compliments because they made it a lifetime achievement. I think that in the last Olympic Cycle, we finally can have some relief. I can tell you that Ilana and Ankie too are already saying about that we won. This is a different style than in the past.

Participant H also recalled that after the Rio Olympic Games representatives of the NOCIL and the families of the victims attended a ceremony in Munich, outside the Olympic Stadium where the new commemoration monument was exposed. The widows of the Munich Victims struggled for decades to get their loved ones commemorated, which resulted in numerous conflicts with the IOC. Participant H said that because of the ceremony in Rio and because "there will always be a ceremony in the Olympic Village," now the widows have very good relations with and IOC President Thomas Bach. Participant H said, "Thomas Bach was standing hugging these two widows for, I don't want to exaggerate, three minutes. They really did not leave each other for three minutes."

Internally the commemoration ceremonies have a socialization purpose for athletes and delegations, for scouts' tribes who organize the annual ceremony and even in different Olympism project with schools and through the Olympic Experience Museum. Externally, the NOCIL holds a ceremony in every Olympic Games in the hosting city that is usually organized together with the Foreign Ministry and the local Jewish Community. According to Participant H, "usually this is our event that we hold with the Jewish community, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the NOCIL. These are the three vertices of that triangle." In the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilians were actually much more involved with the ceremony while the Israeli Foreign Ministry was not. However, Participant H said that the Foreign Ministry will play an active role in the organization of the ceremony in Tokyo, during the 2020 Olympic Games. The NOCIL does not usually hold ceremonies during Winter Olympic Games or the Youth Olympic Games, but according to Participant H, the athletes go through the Olympic Experience Museum where they learn about the history of Israeli sport, including the Massacre.

Another Israeli sports organization that puts emphasis on commemorating the Munich Victims is the Maccabiah. According to Participant G there is a commemoration ceremony and the organization visits a monument together with the NOCIL and Maccabi Germany. Moreover, the Munich Massacre is mentioned in the Opening Ceremony of the Maccabiah Games, when the remembrance plaque Yizkor is read. In the Maccabiah Games the organization also mentioned athletes who fell in wars. In the 2017 Maccabiah Games the parents of fallen water polo player Bar Rahav spoke in the Opening Ceremony. Participant G explained the importance of having emotional commemoration

ceremonies in front of Maccabiah participants from around the world: “You know, at the end, we are here because of them. As much as it sounds a cliché, I really believe it.”

Participant G added:

Really, the more we will know how to preserve and remember and express in an emotional way their memory, their work, their commemoration, then we will make it more emotional. And we want to make it more emotional and really it is for them.

The Maccabiah also have commemoration ceremonies and monuments for the four Australian participants who died in the 1997 Maccabiah Bridge Disaster. In the 1997 Maccabiah Games, while the Australian delegation was marching towards the entrance of Ramat Gan Stadium to enter the Opening Ceremony, the bridge over the polluted Yarkon River collapsed, leading to the death of four participants and over 60 people injured. The 2017 Maccabiah Games marked 20 years to the disaster and the organizations held a special ceremony together with hundreds of members of the Australian delegation. According to Participant G, the trust between the organization and the Australians needed to be rebuilt and that the relations are very strong. Participant H explained the strong relations with the Australian delegation and the importance of remembering the dead athletes:

Listen, the Bridge Disaster is something we cannot renounce. This is very very sad. We did mention 20 years to the disaster in this current Maccabiah. I think that, I was in the ceremony, it was very emotional. Members of the dead families came here. This is to say, that over the last

20 years and because of the disaster and different committees, conclusions were made. The connection with the Australians became a strong and brave connection of friendship. It was not easy at first, trust was rebuilt. I think that the commemoration, both in the Yizkor in the Opening Ceremony and especially in that ceremony, with the bereaved families, the families of the victims, the arrival of an Australian delegation with almost 600 participants. We never had anything like that from Australia. Just understand the operation that is needed for that. I think they proved more than anything that the connection between Maccabi World, Maccabi Israel and Maccabi Australia became stronger.

Internally and externally Israeli sports organizations put emphasis on commemoration, especially when it comes to the Munich Massacre. The terror attack in Munich is a pivotal event in the history of Israel and the history of Israeli sports. While almost all sports organizations send representatives to participate in ceremonies held by the National Olympic Committee, most organizations that did not have athletes who were murdered in the terror attack do not hold ceremonies of their own or have educational activities where their athletes learn about the victims. The National Olympic Committee on the other hand sees commemoration activities as part of the socialization process of Olympic athletes in Israel. Externally, the commemoration ceremony held by the NOCIL, usually together with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with Jewish Communities, does serve Israel's public diplomacy. The importance of commemoration to the reflection of Israeli sports abroad is also manifested through the Maccabiah

organization that holds commemoration ceremonies at dedicated monuments and read a remembrance plaque “Yizkor” during the Opening Ceremony of the Maccabiah Games.

Diverse Melting Pot. Different participants emphasized how through sports their national teams reflect the different sectors in Israeli society. Participant F from the Volleyball Association elaborated how the Israeli melting pot is represented through their national teams:

Our National Team shows amazingly the microcosms of the State of Israel throughout its colors. In the Israeli National Team there are Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs, in the younger national teams there are Druze, our young academy in Wingate there is the same range. There are Sabras, there are Olim that made Aliyah either from Ethiopia or were part of the big Aliyah from the Soviet Union. So just the look of our national team shows diversity and the Israeli melting pot.

The National Paralympic Committee of Israel had two Israeli-Arabic athletes in the delegation for the 2016 Maccabiah Games, including the captain of the women’s goalball team, Elham Mahmid, a blind Muslim athlete. Participant I from the Paralympic Committee said, “We had two in Rio. One was a swimmer, a guy from Shfaram who is paralyzed and also deaf and mute. And there was Elham, the captain of Goalball.”

Several participants emphasized that there are non-Jewish members in their associations. Participant G from the Maccabiah emphasized that “the Israeli delegation of course includes all the citizens of Israel, whether you are Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Bedouin, Druze, or no matter what.” The Football Association for example that has needed to

defend itself from accusation of racism and from threats of being excluded from FIFA, emphasizes the involvement of Israeli-Arabs in the organization. Participant K from the Israeli Football Association said,

I told you about the management, the national teams, our clubs, more than 30% of our teams are Arabs, meaning there are Arab players. Meaning we don't distinguish on that matter. It is part of, there is no doubt this is part of something very unique and special in the political climate that we're in.

Moreover, the Israeli Football Association uses the inclusion of Arab-Israelis in the organization to refute any comparisons to Apartheid South Africa that was excluded from the Olympic Movement because of racist regulations in their sports organizations. Participant K explained why the comparison does not make justice with the Israeli Football Association:

That is not what's going on here. With all due respect, the distinction that needs to be made here is a substantial distinction. There, teams were not allowed to take part in their activities on an ethnic basis. You can't say the same about here. There are Arab teams here, there are Arab players, there are Arab players that play for the Israeli National Team, and there are Arab players that are captains of the Israeli National Team. We have a coach, a youth coach which is from the Arab sector. Meaning, the activity and the approach of the Israeli Football Association on that issue could not be compared to what happened in South Africa during that period.

Some participants even expressed frustration that the State of Israel is not using their diverse composition for public diplomacy purposes, taking the athletes abroad to show how diverse Israeli society is and making them ambassadors. Participant J from the Athletics Association argued that the state does not know how to leverage the diversity in the organization:

The state sends all kind of representatives. I never heard the state coming to the Athletics Association and say: “Listen, we are now going to send a delegation and we are sending people from all kinds of areas, we would like to take one of your top male or female athletes as representatives that will come.” And there are. I am not aware of almost anything, but there are many delegations like that, going on behalf of the state in different relations, co-existence, etc. Take an Arabic athlete, an Israeli-Arabic athlete.

Sports organizations in Israel take pride in their diverse mixture and that different sectors in the Israeli society are represented in the national teams and the delegations that compete abroad. Sports organizations especially emphasize the inclusion of Israeli-Arabs, as it helps them to fight any accusations of institutionalized discrimination. With that said, several participants said that the State of Israel is not using the athletes enough. As a result, there might be some missed opportunities regarding the branding of Israel and Israel’s sports diplomacy.

The Power Component. Almost all participants in this study said that their organization’s representation is impacted by Israeli armed forces. The first and most

noticeable way is through security, as when going to a competition abroad each organization needs to comply with instructions from the Shin-Bet, which has logistical implications both on the Israeli delegation and on the foreign organizers. Several participants said that the security around the delegation causes attention that the organizers do not have with other delegations. Participant C said that some organizations are disturbed by that, but also that some organizations see the Israeli security as a positive reassurance to the security of the competition. Participant B said,

Not everyone wants to deal with our security. There are countries that do not want to host us and I can understand this. We are a bit of a headache. We are not a regular team. We come with security and a security officer that arrives a day before and a security officer that arrives a day after and if a certain personality comes then needed a... but the majority knows that it is necessary. That it is good to host us. It improves security around. There are some that like it.

Participants constantly complained that the security demands by the Shin-Bet and the State of Israel have an impact on their organization, on the competing athletes and on the branding possibilities of Israel. According to participant J from the Athletics Association “we are always asked to downplay the fact that we are Israelis”. The Israeli security has an impact on the performance of Israeli athletes as well. Moreover, participants said the security adds pressure on the system and on the athletes. Participant D from the Sailing Association

explained some of the security bureaucracies that the association needs to go through when sending a delegation abroad:

First of all we are obligated to tell the Shin-Bet, there is an online form and we send it 30 days in advance. This is the delegation, this is the number of athletes, this is the place, and this is the competition, from this date until that date. Here they will sleep, here that. After that there are many regulations we must follow. The Shin Bet start doing its job and checks if there is a need for security, there isn't a need for security. In the last two years almost every travel was at least with one security officer or two.

As mentioned, the focus on security limits Israel's possibilities to expose Israel in international competition. One of the manifestations of that is the restriction of having Israeli symbols on clothes the athletes wear outside the stadium and different movement restriction. Yet, one of the ways non-hosting countries use their participation in Olympic Games to showcase their food and culture is by organizing a "House" in the hosting city for locals and fans to come and celebrate. One of the most famous ones is "The Heineken House," the house of Netherlands. Because of security concerns Israel is prevented to do so, and the only event that Israel hosts during the Olympic Games is not a celebratory event but a commemoration ceremony for the 11 Munich Victims. Participant H from the National Olympic Committee explained that the organization understands there is a missed opportunity there, but that there are things bigger than that:

We don't have an Olympic House. You know, there are many countries that do, in every event they try to export their culture through a local house. The House of the United States, the House of Italy, usually they have a very big sponsor. With the Dutch it's beer. Everyone helps them. We, for security reasons, don't do that. We are indeed a little bit missing out an opportunity to sell Israeli culture.

Other implications for Israel's representation do not necessarily reflect the connection between Israeli sports and the Israeli military - The Israeli Defense Force (IDF in English or Zahal in Hebrew). The organization where that connection is very strong is the National Paralympic Committee of Israel. The Paralympic Movement has historically played a rehabilitation role for injured soldiers. According to Participant I from the National Paralympic Committee in the early days of the movement, Israel was a powerhouse in the Paralympic world, both in terms of innovation about how to use sports for rehabilitation purposes and both in terms of achievements, finishing third in the medal table of the Paralympic Games and event hosting the games in 1968 in Tel-Aviv. Participant I explained the reasons why Israel was dominant in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s:

This [Paralympic sport] was a sport that was relatively in the rehabilitation level. Not rehabilitation, but it was not the high-level performance sport that it is today. There were relatively only few countries in this field and even the countries that competed did not invest a lot of resources in this and did not treat it as competitive sports. Israel was one of the pioneers in

this field. There was the relative advantage of the Polio plague. The Polio people reached their 20s, and there were Zahal disabled veterans from the Six Days War, The Independence War and the Yom Kippur War and apparently there was also awareness.

Although Israel's place in the Paralympic Movement has changed and to some extent declined over the years, the military component still plays a role with the connection between the National Paralympic Committee of Israel and different bodies and organizations in Israel and abroad. According to Participant I "there is the ethos of IDF soldiers with disabilities." Participant I explained that although the percentage of soldiers with disabilities in the delegation has been reducing, they still have a unique role for fundraising for the organization and for the State of Israel. Participant I said,

In the past the majority of the delegation was Zahal disabled veterans.

These days, because the sport is so professional and if you were not an athlete from a young age before the injury, to come at 24 and to be a competitive athlete is almost impossible. It means, thus, if we take the delegation to Rio, only a third of the delegation, 11 from 33, were Zahal disabled veterans and in the past there were much more. This is good for us. One of our problems is that we try to reach young children, to build...but we still lean on the ethos of Zahal disabled veterans. We still use it. We use it when we put pressure to get resources, when we want to raise awareness, in personal stories. I think that a story of a Zahal disabled

veteran many times passes better in the media. Noam's story for example, that someone who was born with a disability.

Another organization that exposes the Israeli Defense Forces to international audiences is the Maccabiah. Participant G from the Maccabiah explained the importance of the Israeli army to the organization: "We in the Jewish world, we do not call it The Israeli Defense Force, we call it the Army of the Jewish People. Protects all the Jews of the world, directly or indirectly." In the opening ceremony a remembrance plaque is read about the fallen soldiers, the closing ceremony is held in Latrun at the home of the Armor Corps where the Maccabiah participants are exposed to different tanks, and the Maccabiah organizations use some wounded soldiers in their ceremonies. Noam Gershony, the helicopter pilot who was injured in the Second Lebanon War in 2006 and won a gold medal in the 2012 Paralympic Games, took part in the Opening Ceremony of the 2017 Maccabiah Games.

Israeli armed forces play a role in the representation of Israel abroad through sports. The special security needs that Israeli delegations have differentiate Israeli teams from others. The security requires adjustments not only from the Israelis but from the organizers of the competitions as well. Several Israeli participants said that because of security there are some missed branding and diplomatic opportunities. The connection with the Israeli military is manifested especially through the Paralympic Movement and through the Maccabiah Movement, and at times is used for branding and diplomatic purposes.

The Jewish Connection. By definition in the Declaration of Independence, Israel is a Jewish State, thus there is no separation between state and religion. As a result, the Jewish religion has different implications for sports in Israel. Participants in this study raised several issues about how the Jewish religion impacts their representation. One issue that came up several times was the clash with Jewish and Israeli holidays. The Shabbat, Saturday, is a day of rest in Israel. Although sports competitions are played in Israel on Saturday, the associations try to avoid having the National Teams compete after the Shabbat starts on Friday afternoon until after the Shabbat ends on Saturday evening. Participant K from the Football Association said, “We try not to play on Saturday, I mean on an international level, where we represent the state.” Participant C from the Basketball Association said that at times when scheduled to play over the weekend, the association approaches the international federation and tries to schedule the times of the game to unconventional hours. Participant C explained,

We call FIBA and tell them that we will play on Friday afternoon. This is not obvious that a world cup or a qualification game needs to be played at 2:00PM on a Friday afternoon. But they understand our needs and the last game against Estonia was at 2:00PM and the next game against Great Britain will also be at 2:00PM on a Friday. This is not an ordinary hour.

There are places where the Israeli associations do not manage to move the hours of the competition, and is required to compete after the Shabbat enters. While for some athletes this is not a major concern, for the athletes who follow the Jewish religion more rigorously, scheduling issues may cause a dilemma. According to Participant C, the

schedule of international basketball tournaments requires all national teams to compete over the weekends, so creative solutions are found. According to Participant C “there are religious players. It does not restrict them. No player is getting hurt because he is religious.”

There are a few specific dates in the calendar where Israel does not hold sport events, such as Yom HaShoah – The Memorial Day for Holocaust Victims, Yom HaZikaron – The Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers and Terror Victims and Yom Kippur, the most religious day in the Jewish calendar which is a day of atonement where people fast to make up for their sins. When the calendars are published Israeli associations try to work with the international federation either not to have international championships on those days, or that the Israeli team will be scheduled to compete before the holiday starts or after it ends. Participants said that usually the international federations understand the needs, however sometimes this is not possible. As Yom Kippur usually falls during September and October where various international tournaments are held, at times it causes problems for Israeli associations. Participant A from the Gymnastics Association explained that the state restricts them to compete on certain holidays or minimizes their presence. Participant C said,

So if the Gymnastics Federation would have liked to compete on Yom HaZikaron or Yom HaShoah, there are clear regulations about Yom Kippur, there are decisions that are above us and we will not do that.

Because obviously we need to work according to the regulations that the regulator has set. These are legitimate regulations that if there is one or

two days a year that we do not need to compete, or compete without music, or there are other restrictions, then we will do that.

Another example of the influence of the Jewish connection was Ludwig Guttmann, a Jewish German doctor who fled the Nazi and founded the Paralympic Movement in England after treating injured war veterans through sports competitions. According to Participant I from the National Paralympic Committee of Israel, the Jewish connection of Ludwig Guttmann helped Israel to become a pioneer in the field.

It must have done something. We are very proud of it of course. We mention Guttmann, who was the father of Paralympic Sport and was Jewish and visited Israel, in every place we go to. By the way, we closed a very emotional cycle. His daughter was the Mayor of the Paralympic Village in London, during the Paralympic Games. She was the Mayer of Village and there was an emotional meeting and she mentioned her father's connection to Israel. I think this is another thing that gave something... I don't know if a special aura, but something. Yes, that was something that Israel was proud of for years and I think this also contributed in the early days to the development in the country, to the perception and to the professionalism. This was really in the first year, and I think Israel was a pioneer and a leader.

Israel is defined as a homeland for Jewish people, according to the Shvut Law (The Law of Return) and the Citizenship Law, any Jewish person that makes Aliyah,

meaning immigrants to Israel, may receive Israeli citizenship. These laws opened various possibilities through sports for Jewish athletes to make Aliyah and represent Israel. Several participants mentioned Tal Brody and David Blatt who made Aliyah after competing in the Maccabiah Games, made Maccabi Tel-Aviv a basketball powerhouse in Europe and generally improved Israeli basketball and exposed the State of Israel. Over the years several athletes who were not able to meet the criteria to represent their origin countries in World Championships and Olympic Games, used the Maccabiah Games to show their abilities and after immigrating to Israel, represented Israel on the biggest stages, including the Olympic Games. Participant H from the National Olympic Committee explained,

I think the Maccabiah is first of all a Zionist event. Second, it is an event that brings lots of tourists and it improves tourism dramatically and on top of that it has a professional value. If we manage to have 2-3 athletes that will do Aliyah, it's a benefit. I am not talking about Tal Brody, David Blatt, etc. Even now, Andrea Murez came from there. We have a new 10 kilometers swimmer that made Aliyah. And there are some who are not good enough, but for sure they are improving the discipline. So there is significance to the Maccabiah, as a Zionist event and as an event that also improves our image. This is a very very large event. It is not easy to organize an event of 10,000 people and I see it as an important part.

Andrea Murez was used as an example of a talented American born Jewish swimmer who made Aliyah and represented Israel in international competitions after

competing in the Maccabiah Games. Participant B from the Swimming Association explained, “Andi Murez was a swimmer in the Israeli National Team. She made Aliyah in... She competed in Rio. She competed in the European Championship, she stayed living in Israel, she studies medicine now.” According to the Maccabiah organization, athletes like Andi Murez embody the essence of the movement, of making Aliyah after competing and staying in Israel afterwards. Participant G from the Maccabiah Games explained,

By the way, the entire story with Andi, and that’s the beauty of the Maccabiah, is that many times they say: Well, Maccabi players that got citizenship, they come for that and they leave. Andi will for sure move her life to Israel. There are not few athletes who make Aliyah because of the Maccabiah. Some of them do that to do the Israeli Olympic criteria which are easier. Most of them stay here. Most of them stay here. Andi went to study medicine. I believe she will stay here, period.

The Maccabiah Movement itself embodies the Jewish connection through every aspect of a movement that has approximately 450,000 members operating in dozens of countries. The impact of the movement does not end with the Maccabiah Games, but through a very influential global network. Some examples referred to connections to Jewish communities, some to pro-Israeli advocacy activities and some to connections to people who can help in times of need such as during disasters or when needing political support, such as putting pressure against excluding the Israeli Football Association from

FIFA. Participant G from the Maccabiah Movement said that when he took the position he “did not know our endless extensions in the world.” Participant G explained,

I did not know the tremendous power this movement has on almost every subject. If today, god forbid, we need help in a god forsaken country, with two phone calls we can reach the right person who can help with a car accident to an injured Israel.

Being defined as a Jewish State, the connection to Judaism has many implications for the representation of Israeli sports organizations. Some of these connections are manifested through limitations that sports associations need to comply with certain laws and regulations such as not having the national teams competing on certain days or doing certain adjustments either with the international organization or with the competing athletes. On the other hand, the Jewish connection also embodies opportunities of representation when it comes to using an influential network or having Jewish athletes immigrating to Israel and taking Israeli sports to higher international levels.

Theme 4: Relations with the State

While there are several definitions of public diplomacy, in this study I use the more traditional ones that refer the term as lead by the state (Cull, 2012; Nye, 2004). Nation branding on the other hand does not have to be led by the state (Anholt, 2010; Fan, 2010). As this study focuses on the role of Israeli sports organizations and how they use sports for public diplomacy and nation branding purposes, many of the participants discussed different relations they have with the State of Israel, and especially with three

governmental bodies: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Tourism and the Sports Administration which is part of the Israeli Ministry of Culture and Sport.

The three offices fulfill different functions, yet at times there are collaborations among them when it comes to sports. The Ministry that is responsible for the branding of Israel is the Ministry of Foreign affairs, although there are some joint campaigns where the Ministry of Tourism is also a partner. Participant X from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs put most of the responsibility on the Sports Administration, with the Ministry of Tourism being another partner: “The responsibilities on sports activities abroad are divided between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and Sport or something like that, it always changes, and the Ministry of Tourism.” Participant X said about the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs “it can be said that every activity that has something going on abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be involved in, through our embassies.” “The importance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is that it is in the field,” Participant X added, “We are the only body that has that global network with embassies around the world.”

According to Participant Y from the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry uses sport as for “a main goal of bringing tourists to Israel.” Participant Y added: “There is no doubt that it helps our branding as a tourism destination, which is at times a chicken and an egg. Meaning, but the goal is not political diplomacy.” When it comes to the Israeli Ministry of Culture and Sport, Participant Y from the Tourism Ministry said, “In the context of promoting in the world, the Ministry of Sports is rarely a partner. The Ministry of Sport is

responsible for building sport in Israel. It is less concerned if event X leads to positive exposure of Israel.”

The Sports Administration is the governing body that organizes sports in Israel. According to Participant Z from the Sports Administration, some of the responsibilities include taking care of facilities, investing in competitiveness, supporting sports events in Israel. Regarding the relations with sports organizations such as associations and committees, Participant Z explained that since the establishment of the National Sports Council, the role of the Sports Administration has become stronger and that the relations were better defined. Participant Z said,

Now the National Sports Council has been established and it confirms the plans of the Toto. The role of the Toto is to bring the money and to distribute it according to the regulations that the National Sports Council sets. In that, the status of the Sports Administration, of the Ministry of Sports became stronger and our correspondence with the organizations is daily. They know that to promote their interests they need to be in good relations with us, like we know that to promote sport we need to be in good relations with them. I think there is fantastic reciprocity between us. I have meeting with the Olympic Committee at least once or twice a week and we have daily conversations. Meaning, there is a system here that is pretty defined, people know their place and just benefit from that.

This theme captures descriptions of participants on how their relations with the State of Israel had an impact on the way they use sports for nation branding and public

diplomacy purposes. Almost all the participants from the sports organizations discussed at least some level of financial dependency on the state. Although there are some financial dependencies, participants from governmental agencies said they do not force sports organizations to advocate for the State of Israel. Participants from sports organizations had mixed opinions about their role as sports organizations when it comes to promoting Israeli public diplomacy or Israel's foreign policy. As mentioned, the three main ministries that participants discussed were the Ministry of Culture and Sport, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism, however several other ministries and governing bodies were mentioned in the context of how Israeli sports organizations use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy purposes.

Financial Dependencies. Almost all the participants in this study said their organization is financially dependent on public funding. Several participants said that they mostly take money from the state or even beg for money from the state. Participant A from the Israeli Gymnastics Association explained the dependencies of the organization on financial support by the government. Participant A said,

Like every sports association, we are an association that is supported almost absolutely. We, let's say that out of the federation's budget, 80% comes from government support, whether it is the Sports Administration, the Council of Management in Sports Betting, that is also subordinated to a Knesset Law, the NOCIL, the Elite Sports Unit.

As a result of these dependencies, some of their activities and priorities such as competing abroad or hosting sport events, are depended on the support of the state. For

example, Participant B from the Swimming Association said that without public support, the organization could not represent Israel in international competitions. On the other hand, if the state provides support, the association can bring elite coaches to improve the competitiveness of the delegation. Participant B said,

The Swimming Association represents Israel. 90% of our income comes from the state. The state, slash the Toto, period. This means that if the state of will take a decision that it reduces the scope of the activities of the Swimming Association financially we could not have swimmers competing internationally. This is an issue of the state. If the state will decide that it will give us resources to bring here Dave Marsh and the mother of Dave Marsh and whoever that will so we can bring them a medal in some kind of competition, then it is a decision of the state, not ours.

Sports, Advocacy and Diplomacy. Although sports organizations are financially dependent on the State of Israel, many of the participants claim that they do not see their role as responsible to promote Israeli public diplomacy or Israeli foreign policy. As Participant C from the Israeli Basketball Association said, “we do not deal with diplomacy which is not sports diplomacy. This is not our role.” Participant D from the Sailing Association stressed as well that the focus of the organization is on achievements rather than politics: “Not about diplomacy, we focus on sport. By the way, everywhere in the world there is avoidance of touching political issues.”

“First of all, before asking how the Israeli athletics association serves the policy, the question that is asked is what is the foreign policy of the State of Israel?,” asked participant J from the Athletics Association. Meaning, although the associations avoid taking a formal political role, several participants said that they do not even know what Israel’s foreign policy is or that Israel does not have a sports diplomacy strategy. Participants said that a long term policy has not been communicated to them. Participant F from the Volleyball Association reflected thoughts by several participants saying: “I don’t know Israel’s foreign policy to say if we serve it.” What was implied by several participants was that perhaps if a sports diplomacy strategy would be communicated better, participants would be able to play a more significant role, without mixing sports and politics. Participant B from the Swimming Association gave an example of hosting bigger sports event as a policy lead by the state:

I think the State of Israel needs a strategy, because of foreign relations, because of media exposure, because of positive aspects, because of economy. To be in a place of bringing here one of those biggest competitions. To host in the State of Israel too. It could be done very easily. Very. There is no problem doing it. Technically.

While most participants said that they don’t see themselves as serving a formal political policy that was dictated by the state, they did discuss some policy aspects that have impact on Israel’s public diplomacy. “It needs to be leveraged and used not for political purposes but for diplomacy,” said Participant E from the Judo Association. Examples included showing values of sportsmanship through the decision to compete

against any opponent regardless of their country of origin, a fair play approach in combating doping and the intent to compete everywhere. Participant H from the Olympic Committee explained that thin line:

First of all we are against mixing sports and politics, but I think that the fact that the National Olympic Committee of Israel set a goal and a principal for itself that we do not boycott anyone, is a very fundamental decision that we want to compete everywhere, in every competition and face everyone who was destiny or the draw encounters us with. This is our guiding line.

There is one organization which does see itself as serving Israeli advocacy. Although the Maccabiah Movement argues that they are a non-political organization when it comes to internal politics in Israel, Participant G from Maccabi World Union and the Maccabiah Organizing Committee argues that the organization does conduct “different Hasbara programs” to bring Jewish Communities closer to Israel. Participant G explained, “We are a non-political organization. Meaning, we do not affiliate with a certain stream in Israeli politics. What we are doing a lot is to bring the Jews of the Diaspora closer to Israel by all means.”

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Participants described several points of interactions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, such as help with entry visas to Muslim and Arabic countries, relations with Jewish communities abroad, or connections to different embassies. The Israeli Football Association used the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when trying to fight the Palestinians’ demand to exclude Israel from FIFA.

Participant K from the Football Association said that when being posed with political challenges and facing a threat of exclusion from a very prestigious international organization “naturally we needed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.” Participant K explained,

Our strategy through all the way were that we don’t mix sports with politics. This strategy was agreed on by all the people here. That we go to people and we are not trying to explain the essence of the conflict itself, because the conflict is hard to explain, especially not to football people who are not familiar with that. They care less about borders and going into all the political questions, and we are also not experts on these matters. But when you go to the people and tell them: “gentleman, these are political issues” and they understand that these are political issues, then the message is received in a clearer way.

Participant K also explained that while the Israeli Football Association argued that they do not mix politics and sports, they needed diplomatic support from Israeli embassies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The participant explained,

We needed to use the embassies. And you’ll say: what do the embassies have to do with sport? But right, the embassies in these places were a way, perhaps in the aspect of a global struggle, meaning, one of our ways to reach different places. Because we as an association don’t have the capability, we don’t have the means, we don’t have the resources to reach

all these places. So it's true that here the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had an active role.

Another point of interaction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is about the international commemoration of the 11 Israeli Munich Victims. According to Participant H from the Olympic Committee the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is very involved with the organization of the commemoration ceremony in the hosting city during the Olympic Games. Although in Rio de Janeiro the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not involved as there were some issues with the ambassador and the embassy, Participant H argues that in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, the Ministry will be much more involved:

In Tokyo it will be different. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be very involved. I met with the previous ambassador, I met with the one that came into office recently too. Both were very, very... Both are great. Both think that this collaboration is necessary. And I hope that Tokyo, whether it will be disclosed or less disclosed, they will be partners.

There are mixed reactions in terms of how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses the organizations for public diplomacy purposes. There are examples where participants said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses their athletes as ambassadors or lecturers in different fundraising events or other events with Jewish communities. For example, participant I from the Paralympic Committee said that Paralympic athletes are used in the congress of The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), one of the most important organizations for Israel's public diplomacy in the United States. According to Participant K, AIPAC showed interest in the Paralympic Committee of Israel, through

stories about the Muslim captain of the goalball team in terms of Israeli-Palestinian relations and about Moran Samuel, a Paralympic athlete who was an envoy of the state and took part in the “Land of Creation” campaign. On the other hand, several participants said that while they would not want the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to politically interfere, different seminars or guidance of how to address problematic issues that the athletes face, were missing, and could be welcomed.

Ministry of Tourism. Participants discussed interactions with the Ministry of Tourism mostly in the context of hosting sport events. In cases where sports organizations hosted international events that were broadcasted live all over Europe, participants said that the support was more significant than when hosting events that received less international coverage. Participant D from the Israeli Swimming Association discussed the support from the Ministry of Tourism when Israel hosted the European Short Course Swimming Championship and the return the Ministry received with the country being exposed to 270 million viewers who watched the broadcasted competitions:

The Ministry of Tourism provided financially support of 650,000 Shekels.

Do the math. For what it paid for the exposure, it paid about 0.023 or 0.025 Israeli Cents for every person that saw Israel. Part of the role of the Ministry of Tourism is to promote tourism through investments. This is why these events are so important for the country.

Ministry of Culture and Sport. The governmental agency that was mostly referred by the participants was the Sports Administration or the Ministry of Culture and

Sport. The two main references to the Ministry focused on the security needed for Israeli delegations and different financial support. Most sports organizations in Israel are at least partly financially dependent on public funding that are regulated by the Sports Administration, which makes that office their main governmental partner. Several participants complained that even when the Sports Administration says it will support them in different activities such as hosting sport event, they cannot fully trust that the original promise of support will be fully respected. Participant F from the Volleyball Association explained,

Me, when I ask to host, I can't rely 100% on the support of the Ministry of Culture and Sport. It is sad to say this. I don't know when I start the... I know from the municipality, the municipality will commit on a certain sum, I know I will be able to get that sum. I know that the association will put the sum that it puts. No matter what, at the end we will put that money, pay the suppliers. So when we start the process we are never in a situation that we know that an X sum that we talked about in the beginning, we will get it at the end. We were in a situation where our back was pushed against the wall in 2015. We talked about a sum of X and we received 20% of it, at best.

Participants shared mixed reactions about the involvement of the Minister of Culture and Sport Miri Regev from the Likud Party. Participant E from the Judo Association complimented Minister Regev for her ongoing support, saying "Miri Regev, by the way, is great. She understands the potential very well. She does that well.

Understanding, helps, gives budgets, not stacking it with bureaucracy.” Other participants complained either that the Minister of Sports, does not care about sport or uses sports to promote her own political agendas. Examples included making political statements after the incident with the Lebanese in the 2016 Olympic Games and after a judo competition in Abu Dhabi, where the organizers did not allow the Israeli athletes to compete with Israeli symbols and when an Israeli athlete won a gold medal, the Israeli national anthem was not played. One participant claimed that Minister Regev shows interest in sport when there are winnings or significant coverage. The participant said,

She does not come because she likes judo. She comes because of the story.

She relates to medals. She wants to make the success her own. Here, I bring the success. With the failures... I am not getting close. Wherever there is a little bit of exposure, she will be there. Football has exposure, so sometimes she will be there. Basketball, Maccabi and such, she will be there. Athletics does not bring exposure, so why should I be there?

Other Governmental Offices. Participants also discussed different interactions and mostly financial and logistical support from other governmental offices and agencies. Among the offices were the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Defense, the Prime Minister’s Office, The President’s House, the Jewish Agency and different municipalities, such as Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem and others. Some participants reflected on how sports impacts different offices, which requires cross-governmental policies. Participant I from the Paralympic Committee gave an example:

I think that sport contributes to physical and mental health, and socially and people with disabilities that practice sport and especially competitive sport, I think that retrospectively it contributes to less spending by the Ministry of Defense on Zahal disabled veterans and to the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services and the Ministry of Health on civilians with disabilities.

There are mixed reactions about the lack of collaborations between their organization and several governmental offices. Some participants discussed the need of collaboration between the different governmental agencies when the sports organization is asked to help the Palestinian sports organizations with exit visa from Gaza Strip. Moreover when it comes to the Maccabiah, there is more compliance by the governmental agencies to use the movement and the games for diplomatic purposes. According to Participant I from the Maccabiah, governmental ministries want to be more involved with the advocacy programs that the Maccabiah leads in Israel and abroad. Participant I explained,

Carlos Tapiero, the VP of Education of the movement, leads it. Really excellent work. And the best evident that this is working is that next year, more and more governmental offices are giving a bigger slice of the pie they distribute and more and more are joining the collaborative activity.

Theme 5: Challenges and Opportunities

The theme *Challenges and Opportunities* captures areas identified with certain changes or with different approaches that could lead to better use of sports for public

diplomacy and nation branding purposes. Participants identified several areas where there is potential but also challenges or that their organization and the State of Israel are not there yet. Some areas discussed were also identified by the states as having high potential for Israeli to use sport for public diplomacy and nation branding purposes. For example, Participant X from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that there could be mutual goals if Israel will become a technological powerhouse in sport. According to Participant X “the scene of SportTech started to break out in the last year or two. Today there are real clusters of SportTech and there are several compounds that deal with sports technologies.”

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs identified that several Israeli start-up companies developed technologies related to sports or sports broadcasting that were bought by international companies. Different branding strategies of the State of Israel, including the branding of Israel as a start-up nation were introduced in Chapter 2 (Avraham, 2009; Senor & Singer, 2009). Participant X gave Replay Technologies as an example of a company that was bought by Intel. Replay Technologies developed broadcasting technologies of netting stadiums with cameras that enable to show the athletes from 360 degrees and during the broadcast creates a visual where a dunking basketball player could be turned around. Other examples included different fan-based applications or digital-health technologies. Participant X said, “The branding strategies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs focus on Israel’s “Creative Energy” and “Entrepreneurial Zeal.” Participant X said, “There are many examples for SportTech technologies, it became a leading field. So the technological angle of sport became an interesting and significant

field in Israel. That is one aspect of branding.” Participant X also explained how through sport-related technology Israel could be better exposed than by focusing on athletic achievements:

So my plan for the next year is to bring with me sports journalists that I was not able to bring to see Israeli sport. So, I bring them to see how Israeli technology is changing the world of sport and not the Israeli sport that changes the world of sport, unfortunately.

The main challenge the state has is that while there is an understanding that there is potential in sport technologies, Israeli sports organizations not very technological. Even the Sports Administration admits that this is an area where they need to improve. According to Participant Z from the Sports Administration, the field of sport technologies is in a very early stage, but there are plans for future collaborations with the Israeli Defense Force and with the Ministry of Education to create more developed systems. Participant Z explained,

We are now in a negotiation with the Ministry of Education, with the Technology Department, where we, together with the National Olympic Committee, want to encourage your people to develop sport technologies. Meaning, applications and different... This will be manifested in the Ministry of Education and also in the military.

Another area where the State of Israel identified potential is in popular sports. Meaning focusing on branding Israel through marathons or bicycle races that have the potential of bringing thousands of tourists to Israel to participate in the events, rather than

focusing on hosting professional championships. Participant Y from the Ministry of Tourism explained,

First of all, let's define what sport events we are talking about and then I'll explain. When I take sports events then there is a kind of sport event where the audiences are spectators, the potential tourists are spectators. For examples: the FIFA World Cup, the Olympic Games and the different championships. And, there are popular sport events where the potential tourist participates in the event. Bicycle races, walking competitions, marathons. We focus mostly on competitions where the tourist is a participant, not spectators. The audiences that come for marathons and bicycle races are audiences that fit our target audiences. These are usually audiences that are more financially established.

One of the challenges that the Ministry of Tourism identified regarding the potential use of popular sport is that sport associations in Israel focus more on high-level competitions and when some do organize relevant events there are different branding issues. Participant Y raised several branding options, such as buying the rights to rename the Israman competition to Ironman competitions, however that is costly. Participant Y also explained the disagreement with the Israeli Athletics Association about rebranding of the Tiberius Marathon:

I take an organization like the Athletics Association that for years has been organizing the Tiberius Marathon. There is the Tiberius Marathon and we estimate it has great potential if we just change its name a little to

Marathon Sea of Galilee, and then all of the residence of Knoxville will know what we are talking about. They did not agree. Marathon, the Athletics Association, what always interests them is to bring the number of professional runners who will make good results. They are less interested in marketing the Marathon in the world, for example.

Another issue that the state raised was the use of Non-Governmental Organizations in the field of sports and development for peace, to help create a positive image of collaborations between Jewish and Arabic people or emphasizing positive values in sport. Some organizations that were mentioned by the state were The Peres Center for Peace and Mifalot. Both organizations focus on sports for development and peace, emphasizing educational values through sports and using sports to bridge between communities. Participant X from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared that there are collaborations on that matter, such as helping to bring top athletes to Israel, or helping financially or logistically when such organizations have activities abroad. Participant X explained,

Education through sport and co-existence through sport and projects like that are projects that we think that represents sides of Israel that we would like to show to the world and that is why we are very happy to collaborate with them. We bring guests that we have from abroad to meet them. Sometimes when they have activities when they go abroad then we help. It really depends on the subject, whether with budgets or in the logistics of

the delegation. If these projects go to a certain country then the ambassador and the embassy will help in things they need for this subject.

Participants from sports organizations identified the potential in these issues and raised issues where they think Israel has potential to better use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy purposes. Sports organizations also discussed the challenges they faced or why the potential has yet to be reached. Among other issues that are raised in this theme vary from relatively minor adjustments from the state to complete shift of national priorities.

SportTech Nation. When discussing the use of sports to expose Israeli products, most participants said that either the Israeli products are less exposed or gave very few examples of Israeli sponsors that receive some exposure when athletes or teams compete abroad. Yet, for most participants the use of Israeli products was not in a high-level priority, especially not if a foreign product is better. Participant F from the Volleyball Association expressed the general responses of the participants: “We try to use, when we have the opportunity of course an Israeli product if it meets the needs or the level. We will not reduce our needed professional level for the use of an Israeli product.”

When discussing Israeli technologies, participants expressed their frustration of a missed opportunity. Several participants said that their organization is not technological enough. On one hand, participants raised issues such as creativity, the Israeli brain, innovation and the understanding of Israel being branded as a start-up nation. On the other hand, participants honestly admitted that their organizations are behind international standards when it comes to being technologically savvy. Even the

Maccabiah organization, where compared to other sports associations there were more strategic collaborations with the State of Israel, admitted that “we are not managing to showcase Israel as a high-tech nation in the Maccabiah” as Participant G from the Maccabiah said. Participant G explained,

This is our Achilles heel. This is the point that if I need to point out something to improve, then it's all the technological issues. It's the website, it's the accessibility, making the Maccabiah accessible through technology to the participants, to the viewers, to Israeli public. We took a leap forward, but we are still very, very far from where we should be or where the world expects us to be.

In the early stages of the Paralympic Movement in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, the Israeli Paralympic Committee has been considered a pioneer and very innovative. The creativity and innovation was reflected for example through “Beit HaLochem,” holistic centers for rehabilitation for wounded soldiers that were also a cultural center and a sport center. According to Participant I from the Paralympic Committee Israel “Batey HaLochem” were a unique Israeli model. The participant said that “Batey HaLochem were “centers for sport, culture and society to IDF wounded soldiers and their families in the highest level, with really the highest level facilities “. According to the participant, delegations from abroad still come to Israel to learn about the model. However, as the Paralympic Movement became more oriented towards high competitive sport, the role of Israel as an innovative country declined and so did the uniqueness of “Batey HaLochem”.

Participant I from the Paralympic Committee said that today “there are more sophisticated models.”

There are some associations that do use Israeli technologies or even had a supplier develop technologies for them. Participant A from the Gymnastics Association discussed Israeli software the organization uses for tournament management and refereeing. Participant A said that main companies in the world of gymnastics are Longines and Swiss Timing and that now an Azeri company that receives state funding is also getting more visibility. According to Participant A the Israeli Gymnastics Association is not competitive on a global market, but did manage to create the technology that gives the organization a proper solution in a relatively affordable price. Participant A explained,

I would not say that we entered the international market in software development for competitions management, but we did create something local to manage the competitions of the [Israeli] Gymnastics Federation. It is not in that [international] level, but whoever comes and sees Grand-Prix Holon or Grand-Prix Eilat or the Israeli Championship sees that technologically, on a basic level, this competition does not fall from a competition that is a world championship. Not in terms of visibility, not in practice.

There are some other examples of the use of statistics or auctions for different software, but even in organizations that do use some, participants expressed a sense of frustration that their associations are behind. With that said, participants also reflected on the potential of Israeli technology in sport. Participant J from the Athletics Association

gave the example of Orad Company that developed the broadcasting technology of having the world record line during swimming competitions. Participant J described the innovation: “Orad Company started in world championships. In world championships when you see the world record line, Orad Company does that. It invented that thing.” According to Participant J, these technological innovations are sold to international broadcasting corporations who use them when broadcasting international events.

Participant J added,

Today you have all the animation that you see on the screen when the javelin is and in football you see how many meters is that from the goal. I know that Orad was the first company that invented [different animations technologies that are used in sports broadcasting]. Because I remember it coming with that technology and saying that broadcasting networks that are involved with... NBC bought their technology for the Olympic Games.

Although organizations admit they are not too technological at the moment, they showed understanding that there are technological possibilities and opportunities. Participants discussed several successful Israeli technological companies and startups, and recognized future opportunities. According to Participant H from the NOCIL, the technological aspect is going to be one of the leading projects of the committee: “in this Olympic cycle, I put the technologic subject in the top of the priorities. Particularly because of this story that we are leaders in this field of technology and sport.” Participant H explained how through planned projects and collaborations with scientists from

Weizmann Institute and the Technion, the use of the Wingate Institute that is the National Sports Institute in Israel and different Israeli governmental organizations, Israel can become a greenhouse for sports technologies:

Yes, Weizmann Institute. Two professors, not old, amazing. We sat there, that is the fun part of the job. We have a connection with the Technion, we are creating such connections. I have a connection with an Israeli company and now that Wingate is becoming a national institute I told them that I want to have this company netting all the gyms with cameras that give instant feedback and analyze things you want. Now my request from Wingate, I am in the strategy committee, I told them: “You need to be a technological greenhouse.” They wrote it down as one of the goals: “To initiate and to promote innovations in the field of professional sport.” We put it as one of the goals of the institute.

The NOCIL recognized that joint collaborative projects about sports technologies will benefit not only athletic achievements, but also the technological companies themselves that will be exposed through Israeli sports to global audiences and to bigger markets. Participant H said, “They need us, this is not really nice, but they need us as guinea pigs. Because the money is not here. They know that the Israeli market is a small market.” Participant H added, “broadly, all the start-ups that we talk to want that, because of the success of an Israeli athlete they could sell it to the world. Because the big money is there, not with us.”

Participants from Israeli sports organizations admit that their organizations are not among the leading technological bodies in the world of sports and are often behind international expectations and do not meet the branding of Israel as a start-up nation. Some organizations use local technologies creating solutions to their own needs and some use foreign technologies. The NOC of Israel recognized the potential of making the connections between sports, technologies, and private companies that want to be globally exposed and the branding attempts of the State of Israel, thus, putting the technological aspect as a top priority.

Sports and Development for Peace. While participants from sports associations repeatedly said that they are not involved with Israeli official foreign policy or diplomatic efforts, they did emphasize different inherent values in sports that are used for education purposes or for bridging communities. Participant E from the Judo Association said, “Sport is a great tool. I think sport is a great to make connections between people, for social mobilization, to break barriers.” Participant F from the Volleyball Association described a very social orientation of the organization. Participant F explained,

The motto of the association is “the real social network.” That’s the motto of the association. The Israeli Volleyball Association took on itself in the statement level, in the local level, in the club level the branding of the real social network. The real social network is that we actually say that while today everyone is on social networks but on screens and there are no real friends, here our network represents the real friendships.

The branding of the Israeli Volleyball Association as “the real social network” also reflects its social activities that the organization organizes and with collaborations with organizations that focus on sport and development for peace, such as The Peres Center for Peace. According to Participant F: “We do some activities with the Peres Center for Peace for example, for Jewish-Arab collaboration. The Israeli Volleyball Association went and had an event in Holot Detention Center⁷.”

The emphasis on educational and empowering values of sports was mentioned by several participants. Participant H from the Olympic Committee discussed the growing emphasis the organization is putting on promoting Olympism and Olympic Values. Participant H said, “Olympism for the National Olympic Committee is together in the front line with the professional subject.” Participant H explained,

I see sport as the best tool to bridge between everything that is religion, ethnicity, and everything. Of course gender, with men and women. I see sport as the best way. I wish physical education teachers would understand the power physical education has. It is funny to say, but I’m saying that this is the most important subject because of all the things sports can do. And I said that the way to educate the young generation is through sport, through the values of sport, through excellence, respect, friendship, these are maybe big words but each and every one of us experienced them of a day-to-day basis.

⁷ Holot Detention Center is a detention facility in the south of Israel that houses African illegal immigrants and asylum seekers (Azulay, 2017).

Members of the NOCIL received an international award in the “Fair Play” in a conference that was hosted in Israel in 2017 for promoting Olympics, and creating the activities, including programs that are implemented through the formal and non-formal education system. However, according to Participant H, these positive activities do not receive enough media coverage. Participant H:

It’s not enough. We are now launching a new website of the National Olympic Committee, because our website is very weak. Ilana [Berger, a former tennis player] does that, she is amazing. We went on the platform of the International Olympic Committee, It will be very friendly, very nice, and very alive. We are trying to do the Olympism there as well.

Vered Bouskila⁸, one of her jobs will be to spread this issue of Olympism and make sure it will reach more places. Not enough. Unfortunately, it is less interesting for the media.

Participant K from the Israeli Football Association also discussed the importance of sports to bridge communities. According to Participant K, there are many projects in football where Jewish and Arab children play together. These projects focus on the social impact of sports. Participant K explained,

The only place where we see ourselves expressed is football as a bridge between peoples, not in the conflict itself. We think that at the end, you know, when Arab children and Jewish children take the field and play football, these are the most beautiful photos about this conflict. To show

⁸ Vered Bouskila is a former athlete who represented Israel in three Olympic Games who works in the National Olympic Committee of Israel (Israel Sport Staff, 2017).

that on the field everyone is equal and can collaborate and play with each other. We have many projects where we are involved with that. There are many clubs that take part, and see their role not only on the professional side but also on the social side. For me, this is the central place. Meaning, to show that football can change images, break mythos, and be something.

Another sport organization that uses sports for inclusion purposes is the National Paralympic Committee of Israel. According to Participant I there is a message of “inclusion” that could be better leveraged on an international level with the help and collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Participant I said,

I think the main thing we need to focus is our general branding, even in Israel. I think that good branding in Israel will have impact on our branding abroad. I think we are not managing enough to convince, but there is progress here and there is something that could be a branding tool for the State of Israel, even internally. To promote values of accepting the different is something you could use as a social tool, ethical, in the State of Israel and abroad. I think we are in a better place today and we understand the cards we have in our hand, but we are not using them enough. I think that perhaps the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the governmental offices do not know how to use us for this issue.

Participants in this study discussed the growing emphasis on sport and development and peace, the importance of sports to bridge communities and educational values of sports. Participants discussed numerous activities that their organizations are

holding or are involved with. The NOC even won an international prize. However, participants also acknowledged that they have not been able to leverage these activities to attract enough national or international attention and that with the help of the state they could be better leveraged for positive branding or diplomatic purposes.

Influence in International Associations. Participants raised several points of interaction with the international federations that have direct or indirect impact on the branding of Israel or Israel's public diplomacy. One issue that participants raised about the need of support by international federations was protecting Israeli interests when different Muslim and Arabic countries host sport events and cause visa issues or force Israeli athletes to compete without Israeli symbols. Participants said that when their associations have Israeli representatives in international bodies or Israelis in influential positions, they can help decisions that favor Israel, such as hosting events in Israel or not scheduling events on Jewish holidays. Participant E from the Judo Association gave examples of Moshe Ponti, the chairman of the Israeli Judo Association that through political influence in the international federation, managed to change a date of a competition so it will not fall on Yom Kippur. Participant E said,

Ponti is doing amazing diplomatic work for the State of Israel. He goes, and he runs and he meets and everything voluntarily. He goes and runs and meets and fights, and he managed to move a competition from Yom Kippur to a different date. People don't understand. Can you move a date in a UEFA match? No. Ponti moved.

Several participants said that while they do not engage in Israeli politics, they are playing a political game in the international bodies. Participant C from the Basketball Association said, “We are engaged with sports politics to reach certain achievements in FIBA, but we are disconnected from Israeli politics.” Participant D from the Sailing Association said for example that hosting international conferences will help the position of the organization. Participant D said,

I would really want to be more active from my position in international conferences of associations at the World Sailing Association... I would really want to host such an event. We always travel because each time it's in a different place. It's more realistic with the European Association.

The importance of having influence in international bodies was addressed by participants from sports organizations and by participant from governmental bodies. Participants reflected on future possibilities that might help to improve their influence in international associations. However, for that to happen, the state needs to be more supportive. Participant H from the Olympic Committee said, “To encourage and even to compensate an association that reaches international committees, whether it is to the Boards of Directors or different committees it will improve our power. It will upgrade us.”

Review Sports Priorities. Participants from government agencies and from sports organizations discussed opportunities that Israel could have if some of the focus will be changed. Participant F from the Volleyball Association said that Israeli sport could benefit through internal shift of priorities in the organization. Participant F gave an

example of investing resources and efforts in beach volleyball rather than in indoor volleyball embody competitive opportunities that could eventually influence Israel's international exposure. Participant F said,

I can say that it has the ability to become an attractive discipline is much bigger for many several reasons. First of all, the Israeli weather is such that it enables to have outdoor activities through a much larger period of time. The sea atmosphere, the beach, it gives a feeling of freedom, of happiness. The event of beach volleyball is not just an athletic event, it's an event of music, it's an event of fans with beer, it's an event where the announcer makes the audience much more involved in the game itself. And there is no need to ignore that it's also a more sexy discipline, a discipline that sells more.

Participants discussed the potential of implementing different sports such as goalball or ultimate Frisbee or figure skating in the Maccabiah Games that might have different impacts either on the participants or on the competitiveness of Israeli sport. According to Participant G from the Maccabiah organization, the program consists of approximately 40 disciplines and every games a few are added and a few are dropped, but the organization does not want to spend most of the time and the energy on the less popular ones. Participant G explained that the athletic program of the Maccabiah is flexible but depends on the demand of the participants and the delegations:

We want to develop something that will really be big enough to stand on its own, and we will not need to spend 90% of the time to 10% of the

Maccabiah. We usually prefer the opposite. To spend as much time as possible to the larger disciplines, and we find ourselves spending much more time to esoteric discipline that at the end nobody enjoys. So you know, usually we have about 40 disciplines in the last Maccabiahs, one drops, one gets added, we pretty much keep the right formula.

The Ministry of Tourism emphasized that they see popular sports and participants in sports as such as cycling, and marathons having potential to bring tourists to Israel. That potential was also identified by participants from sports organizations who identified participation sports as having the potential to attract wealthy golf players during the winter, being attractive to Israeli start-up companies, and holding marathons in attractive destinations. There are several marathon races organized in Israel every year such as the Tiberius Marathon that is organized by the Israeli Athletics Association, the Tel-Aviv Marathon, the Jerusalem Marathon and other marathons that are organized by the municipalities and private organizations. Although the Athletics Association focuses mostly on the competitive Tiberius Marathon, Participant J from the organization agreed that “these competitions, no doubt they bring the runners to Israel.” Fine tuning some of the goals of the associations regarding popular sports and participatory based-sports and better collaboration with governmental agencies, has the potential to lead to future opportunities for the State of Israel.

Change of National Priorities. Participants identified different opportunities if the State of Israel will change national priorities. Participants from sports organizations discussed different models they were exposed to in countries such as Qatar, Montenegro

and Hungary, that Israeli could adopt or learn from. Participant B from the Swimming Association gave an example of a country that is not significantly larger than Israel or wealthier than Israel that used swimming for political purposes. Participant B said, “Just to understand, in Hungary they decided to take the swimming issue professionally and improve it for political reasons.” Participant B explained that the Hungarian Prime Minister targeted hosting sport events and as a result improve not only the international image of the country but also the lifestyle of the residence. Participant B said,

He took that as a strategy and just invested in building pools and implementing them into the education system knowing in advanced that the strategy is eventually to bring and host the World Championship. He also hosted the World Championship in Gymnastics. Eventually he will host the Olympic Games as well. Lots of revenues for the country. Media exposure of the country. That was his strategy. This is amazing.

Participants argued that for Israel to be able to host these types of events, a significant change of priorities needs to happen, especially in the context of the Israeli-Arabic dispute. Participant B from the Swimming Association said that if the State of Israel instead of investing in the military will invest in hosting sports events, new branding and diplomatic opportunities will arise. Participant B said that a new long-term strategy is needed: “The state needs to decide on a strategy that it wants to host a world championship in five, 10 years. That it is willing to invest money in it.” According to the participant from the Swimming Association, investing in hosting world championships will result in positive implications for the State of Israel such as “Exposure, foreign

relations, international relations, media exposure of the State of Israel.” Participant B explained,

A tourist that comes from here happy will go and tell how happy he is and how good it is. Michael Phelps will come back from a competition here and will say how much fun it was in Israel and his followers will see that. Understand what it will do to this country. For sure showing a competition like that will do better than buying another F-35⁹.

Another suggestion for a shift in national priorities regarding the Israeli-Arabic dispute was about a joint bid of Israel and Palestine together. Participant J from the Athletics Association said that if such a bid will ever happen, the International Association of Athletics Federation will not only accept it, but will financially support the competition, including building facilities. Participant J said,

The moment Israel and Palestine will want to host a World Championship together, I believe they will say: “Guys, we will give you everything. We will build all the facilities, just do something like that.” The entire world will look at athletics, because, you know, we know what the meaning of the Israel-Arab dispute is.

In conclusion, participants from sports organizations and governmental agencies see interfaces between sports and Israeli’s public diplomacy and nation branding. This chapter captures five themes that emerged from the data and captures the voices of participants from sports organizations and governmental agencies. Theme 1 discussed

⁹ The F-35 is an advanced fighting jet used by the US Armed Forces and by the Israeli Defense Forces. In 2017 Israel finalized agreements to purchase 17 more F-35 planes for approximately an estimated cost of over 1.5 billion dollars (Gross, 2017).

how participants saw different implications of the Israeli-Arabic dispute regarding the use of sports for public diplomacy and nation branding purposes. Among the main implications were security issues, boycotts, exclusions, limitations of hosting in Israel and impacts of representing Israel abroad. The significances that participants saw in hosting sport events in Israel and in representation were addressed in Themes 2 and 3 respectively. Theme 4 reflected the way participants from sports organizations experienced the different relations with the State of Israel and the different dependencies, collaborations, limitations and implications. Theme 5 discussed the challenges and the opportunities participants saw in regard of how their organizations could better use sports to improve Israel's nation branding and public diplomacy. I discuss the analysis of these findings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I discuss how this study contributes to the literature on Israel, nation branding, and public diplomacy (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006). I also discuss broader theoretical and conceptual implications that could be learned from the case of Israel, especially in relations to nation branding, public diplomacy and related research areas (Anholt, 2010; Cull, 2008; Nye, 2004). The five themes that emerged from the data represent the most important patterns among the participants' views on the role of their organizations in Israel's use of sport for public diplomacy and nation branding. As I pointed out in chapter two, there are competing views in the literature regarding the differences between those two concepts (Fan, 2010). There is agreement though that both are related to a country's image (Anholt, 2010; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015). Country image is an interdisciplinary area of research, combining place branding research from business management and marketing, as well as public diplomacy and national identity from social sciences such as political science, sociology, and communication studies (Anholt, 2010; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015). While participants in this study provided information that applies to several of these areas of research, the study did not focus on the outcome of how Israel is perceived, but on the attempts made by Israeli sports organizations to use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy purposes.

Implications for Israel's Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy

Gilboa (2006) argued that Israel's image has been dramatically deteriorating, partly because of not having clear strategies regarding soft power and public diplomacy. Related to this, several participants in this study discussed that lack of communication

between the State of Israel and Israeli sports organizations. The representatives of Israeli sports organizations said several times that they are not familiar with Israel's foreign policy or that the strategic collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is very limited. The lack of communication and the problematic collaboration between sports organizations and the State of Israel were discussed in Theme 4: *Relations with the State* and in Theme 5: *Challenged and Opportunities*.

Both Gilboa (2006) and Aouragh (2016) criticized the focus of Israeli public diplomacy on "Hasbara," an apologetic approach used for advocacy, especially in the context of the Israeli-Arabic dispute. Israel is perceived as the Goliath in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Avraham 2009; Gilboa, 2006), and is being accused of occupying or even having Apartheid characteristics (Gilboa, 2006), the use of advocacy to defend Israeli policies are apologetic.

Participants voiced different opinions and experiences regarding the use of sports for public diplomacy purposes. Several participants said that using sports for foreign policy purposes is not common for sports organizations. Moreover, international sports institutions have policies against political interference of governments in sports associations (FIFA, 2011; IOC, 2015) and may sanction associations if governments intervene. Some sports organizations, especially the Maccabiah Movement and the National Paralympic Committee of Israel, were more receptive to being used for public diplomacy purposes than others. Several participants dismissed any kind of political use of the organization for public diplomacy or foreign policy purposes, and some raised suggestions of having the athletes go through briefings or seminars or that the State of

Israel will use athletes as ambassadors or presenters of the State of Israel. In the early days of the State of Israel, Israeli sports were much more politically depended on the Israeli government (Kaufman & Galily, 2009) and Israeli governments used sports internally (Kaufman, 2007) and internationally as political tools (Afek, 1994b; Alperovich, 2007). Over the years the political affiliation and the political dependency has gradually declined (Galily, 2007). As a result, the ability of the government to control sports organizations and to use them for political purposes has declined as well. Participants from sports organizations emphasized that Israel lacks of coherent sports diplomacy. The lack of coherent sports diplomacy emphasizes Gilboa's (2006) argument that public diplomacy is the missing component in Israel's foreign policy.

Gilboa (2006) addressed the charge of "Apartheid" as a very damaging for Israel's public diplomacy. Some participants in this study were very sensitive to the term Apartheid, emphasizing Israel is not an Apartheid country and there is no institutional discrimination between citizens based on their religion. The association of Israel with Apartheid South Africa poses a strategic threat to Israel's image. Since 2005, the Boycotts, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement has been calling for international sanctions against Israel, branding Israel as an occupying discriminating country (MacLean, 2014; Palestinian BDS National Committee, 2015). Participants in this study acknowledged that BDS poses a strategic threat to the State of Israel and that there are implications for sports. The BDS has mostly been involved in calls to boycott events in Israel and in the support of the Palestinian demand to exclude Israeli from FIFA. Several participants said that Israeli sports show that Israel is not an Apartheid country. This is

evidenced by hosting sports events or by including Israeli-Arabic athletes in Israeli national teams. While participants from most sports organizations said they were not involved with public diplomacy, the Maccabiah Movement does collaborate with the State of Israel and does have anti-BDS programs abroad, such as advocacy programs in universities abroad. These activities are sponsored and funded by the State of Israel.

According to MacLean (2014), there is a difference between the protests against South Africa and the protests against Israel. MacLean (2014) argued that “analysts and activists need to grasp the analytical distinctions between playing rugby against South Africa and playing soccer in Israel” (p. 1849). Yet, the strategic threat does not end with protests against playing in Israel, but there are political boycotts against Israeli athletes (Reiche, 2018). Theme 1: *The Conflict* captured the different ways the conflict impacts the Israeli sports. Examples include boycotts, refusal of entry visas, not shaking hands, protests, not showing national symbols, and even wars. There are many manifestations of the conflict which prevent Israel to maximize its potential both in terms of nation branding and public diplomacy, but also in terms of athletic achievements. As a result, some collaboration between Israeli sports organizations and the Israeli government are formed. Thus, although most participants said that they do not see themselves as serving Israel’s foreign policy, the conflict forces them to seek help from the state on a diplomatic level.

The collaborations between sports organizations and governmental ministries are discussed in Theme 4: *Relations with the State*. Strategic collaborations with the ministries happen when sports organizations need diplomatic help to enter different

countries and participate in competitions or when facing threats of exclusions that might damage Israel's public diplomacy. Another form of collaboration between the State of Israel and an Israeli sport organization was with the Israeli Football Association when it faced demands of exclusion from FIFA. For example, according to Participant K from the Football Association, the organization needed the help and the connection from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other governmental ministries. Participant maintained that he did not engage in Israeli advocacy, arguing that sports and politics should be separated. Thus, sports organizations in Israel walk on very thin ice, trying not to engage in advocacy and official public diplomacy, but do see the importance of emphasizing inclusion and diversity as a way to show a non-discriminative image. While sports organizations in Israel shared different views about their role in Israel's public diplomacy, they did emphasize a policy of competing everywhere and against everyone. This is another attempt by Israel to position itself with international norms (Simri & Polidoro, 2002) accepted by the Western World (Dart, 2016), rather than with long political boycotts associated with other Arabic countries from the region (Reiche, 2018).

Israel's image has been negatively associated with the Israeli-Arabic dispute (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006). Israel's participation in international sports has been impacted and at times even overshadowed by international politics (Afek, 2004a; Alperovich, 2007; Galily & Zach, 2002; Guttman, 2002; Kaufman, 2005; Parry, 2012). This study shows that the Israeli-Arabic dispute constantly influences Israeli sports organizations even in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Over the years, the political situation and security concerns prevented Israeli teams and clubs to host in Israel

(Galily, Tamir & Levy, 2012), which had different implications for Israel's public diplomacy. Dart (2016), for example, argued that by hosting the 2013 U21 UEFA European Championship, Israel tried to brand itself as a European country rather than being associated with the Israeli-Arabic dispute. In Theme 2: *Hosting Sports Events*, participants argued that hosting sports events have a normalizing impact on Israel. Delegations that come to Israel and the audiences watching the broadcasts, see Israel as a normal country where sports is being played. Avraham (2009) also recommended a strategy of "come see for yourself" (p. 206), rather than rely on the negative media coverage. Anholt (2010) added that Israel recognized the country's image problem and is trying to shift towards a tactic of "to know us is to love us" (p. 61), emphasizing non-militant facets of the country. The participant from the Judo Association also said that by hosting sports events Israelis are humanized "it is important that we will be known and they will see we don't have horns." These opportunities are taken from Israeli sports organizations when the conflict escalates.

Participants discussed negative implications of the political and security situations in all five themes. In Theme 1: *The Conflict*, for example, I identified the multiple ways the Israeli-Arabic dispute has influenced Israeli sports and how branding potentials are being lost. The participants commented on how the Israeli-Arabic dispute negatively influences Israeli sports, how it limits their opportunities, and how the implications of the conflict on Israeli sport affect Israel's nation branding and public diplomacy. The participants were not optimistic that the political situation will be resolved in the near or even distant future. Thus, based on the past decades and based on the responses of the

participants, Israel is bound to continue to be associated with the Israeli-Arabic dispute even through sports. This does not mean that there are no opportunities in Israel's sports, but that any kind of branding and public diplomacy strategy will need to acknowledge that the prolonged conflict is ongoing.

There are some diplomatic and branding strategies that Israel can adopt without solving the conflict. Gilboa (2006) suggested several ways of how Israel could stop the deterioration of its international image including new strategic planning, new branding, educating about Israel's and professional training, utilizing non-governmental institutions, focus on Israel's cyber public diplomacy and focus on improving reputation in Europe. Both Avraham (2009) and Gilboa (2006) suggested shifting the message from the prolonged conflict towards daily life, culture, and especially on Israel's high technology. Branding Israel as a "high-tech nation" (Doron, 2011, p. 314) or as a "Start-Up Nation" (Gazit & Sauber, 2014, p. 220) emphasizes not only Israel's high technology, but also Israel's innovation and the ability to adapt to a changing environment and to survive political and social adversities. Theme 5: *Challenges and Opportunity* discussed one of the most significant findings of this study, which is the potential Israel has developing sports technologies, thus improving sports in Israel while branding the country as a "SportTech Nation." While most participants acknowledged that their organizations are not global leaders in sports technologies, they do understand the potential of collaboration with the state. The participant from Israel's NOC discussed several future plans and stressed that Wingate Institute, Israel's national sports institute, needs to be a "technological greenhouse."

Also, members from Israeli sports organizations repeatedly emphasized that Israel has more power in the European organizations than in the world organizations. They particularly noted the positive implications of hosting European competitions in Israel. Thus, with better communication and with a clearer strategy, improving Israel's reputation in Europe could be achieved through sports organizations. Results of this study further show that participants understand the potential Israeli sports have by putting more focus on technology. However, participants also mentioned that their organizations are not technological leaders. Moreover, while there are some Israeli start-up companies that focus on sports and their technologies were even sold to international corporations, participants acknowledged that Israeli sports organizations do not actively represent Israeli technology to the world. Almost all participants said that their organizations are behind the rest of the world technologically. However, members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Israeli sports Administration, as well as members of Israeli sports associations also discussed the opportunity of branding Israel as a "SportTech Nation." The participant from the NOC of Israel, for instance, discussed specific plans of how to implement Israeli technology in a way that would benefit Israeli sports, the potential of private companies to reach international audiences and the image of the State of Israel. Branding Israel as a "SportTech Nation" is a unique opportunity that with better collaboration has the potential improve Israel's brand, public diplomacy, and image.

Moreover, the private sectors could also play a role in a country's public diplomacy and branding (Anholt, 2010; White, 2015). The relations between the public and the private sectors could be complimenting or competing. According to Anholt

(2010), “public diplomacy needs to be as fast-moving, as a demotic and as compelling as the most popular of popular culture, and a campaigning mentality becomes the order of the day” (p. 120). Compared to the public sector, a potential advantage of private companies is that they are less democratic and chief executives can implement their visions in a tolerated tyranny (Anholt, 2010). Meaning, the private sector is not held back by slow governmental bureaucracy and can execute policies and decisions faster. In the ever changing environments of start-up companies and of sports, the potential connection between the Israeli public and private sectors of technologies companies embodies even more opportunities to create dynamic Israeli sports diplomacy.

This study demonstrates that Israeli sports organizations feel they are not being educated enough about Israel’s public diplomacy and there is lack of collaboration regarding professional trainings. However, the findings also show that both members from sports organizations and members from governmental agencies understand that there are sports-related NGOs where Israel has branding opportunities such as The Peres Center for Peace. Participants mentioned the importance of sports activities that bridge communities and promote positive universal values, and activities that embody branding opportunities as well. Examples included the participant from the Israeli Football Association discussing joint activities of Jewish and Arabic children, the participant from the NOCIL discussing the emphasis the organization has on the promotion of Olympism, and different collaborations with sports and development for peace organizations. These activities, collaborations and programs, can be used strategically as branding opposite to

the stereotype (Avraham, 2009) of Israel as the occupier, and as part of a strategy of branding Israel focusing on improving the world (Hassman, 2008).

NGOs have posed threats to Israel's public diplomacy (Steinberg, 2006). Anholt (2010) praised the ability of NGOs to communicate effectively because they combine political expertise and broad strategic knowledge of governments with speed, efficiency and communication of competitive companies in the marketplace. Moreover, they also have the advantage of being able to specialize on one issue. Thus, collaboration with NGOs in Israel that focuses on a strategic agenda of bridging sectors through sports could fit into Israel's branding strategy and add another dynamic dimension to Israel's public diplomacy.

Over the past decades, international media coverage of Israel has also contributed to the deteriorating image of Israel (Gilboa, 2006). The negative image is reflected both in the constant focus on the Israeli-Arabic dispute (Avraham, 2009; Cavari, Yarchi & Pindyck, 2017) and on what has been described as a biased coverage (Gilboa, 2006; Steinberg, 2006), especially in Europe. The latter has sympathized with the Palestinians or emphasized the Palestinian suffering (Malinsky, 2015). In this study, participants acknowledged the importance of international media and the way Israeli sports can provide ways to improve the coverage of Israel. Several participants mentioned examples of international journalists who covered unique angles of Israeli sports that were not related to the Israeli-Arabic dispute, such as athletes who immigrated because of falling in love (Mochizuki, 2015) or the importance of a football club to a southern city in the desert (Montague, 2017). These examples fit Avraham's (2009) strategic

recommendation of branding a country that is going through a prolonged conflict by showing a human touch that softens the hard image.

Participants said that international media coverage of Israel hosting sports events exposes both journalists and media consumers to different sides of Israel. It can send the message that Israel is not just about war and conflict, but also peaceful participation in sport. Journalists perceived Israel as “normal” country, which refuted pre-conceived perceptions of Israel as an underdeveloped country. Theme 5: *Challenges and Opportunities* captured how Israeli sports organizations and the State of Israel are trying to use sports to show different sides of Israel.

Events are broadcasted to dozens and, at times, hundreds of millions of people, international audiences might see Israel as a “normal” country that hosts sports events. Participants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism, as well as participants from sports organizations, mentioned that video clips promoting Israel, including the campaign “Land of Creation,” were played during international broadcasts of the competitions. Thus, while Israel is not able to host the biggest international sports events, whenever Israel does manage to host events that are broadcasted internationally, Israel is represented outside the context of the conflict.

Israel’s national identity was reflected through the participants mostly in Theme 3: *Representation*. According to Samocha (1997), Israel is an Ethnic Democracy. Israel is defined as a Jewish country and a homeland for Jewish people (Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel, 1948), but also secures liberal rights of non-Jewish citizens (Samocha, 1997). Participants from sports organizations discussed how Israel’s

democracy and the connection to Judaism impact the way Israel is represented through sports. The connection to Judaism was discussed in various contexts including the connections to Jewish communities abroad, as well as the role of the Shvut Law that enables Jewish athletes to immigrate to Israel, receive Israeli citizenship, and in certain cases represent Israel. Another implication of the connection to Judaism was the roles of Jewish holidays, Jewish traditions, implications of Yom Kippur or the Shabbat. Participants said that different Jewish holidays have scheduling and logistical implications for Israeli athletes and teams competing in international competitions and when hosting sport events in Israel. Participants also emphasized the diversity in Israeli society. In their view, Israeli sports organizations and Israeli national teams embody Israel's melting pot. Participants talked about non-Jewish citizens and especially Israeli-Arab athletes, teams, coaches, and administrators as examples of the diverse, inclusive, and democratic nature of Israeli sports or when addressing accusations of racism or comparisons to Apartheid.

Results of this study show that Israeli sports still need to defend itself in international federations (Dorsey, 2017) from accusations of racism. Moreover, racism in Israeli sports is discussed in international media (Dorsey, 2016). The disciplinary actions the Israeli Football Association took against Beitar Jerusalem might not have solved racism and violence in Israeli sports, but did satisfy FIFA enough to acknowledge that racism is not an institutional problem in Israel's football. Bar, Yarchi, and Galily (2017) argue that the Palestinians attempts in FIFA was not very successful based on the limited international coverage and on the attempt to use of the sports for a political attack.

Nevertheless, the discussion of Israel in the context of racism in sports is damaging for Israel's international image (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006). There are several steps Israel could take to emphasize the inclusion of different populations. Some of these actions involve public relations and better collaboration between the state and sports organizations. This, however, might require changing policies. For example, the last time an Israeli-Arab athlete represented Israel in the Olympic Games was in 1976 in Montreal (Last, 2008). Although Israeli-Arabs do represent Israeli sports including in national teams, the Youth Olympic Games and the European Games negatively influence Israel's image for not having an Israeli-Arab athlete in the Olympic delegation in over 40 years (Borowitz, 2012). A potential solution could be having a strategy of developing Olympic sports in the Israeli-Arab sector.

Sorek (2003) argued, that football "constitutes a unique sub-sphere of Israeli public life where the Arab citizens are highly involved and achieve remarkable heights compared to other realms" (p. 426). There is a duality in the involvement of Arabs in Israeli football (Sorek, 2003; Tamir & Bernstein, 2015). On one hand, football serves as a bridge and source of integration, where Israeli-Arab athletes are better represented than in other sphere in Israeli society. On the other hand, Kertcher (2015) argued that Israeli media focuses on manifestations of racism especially around Beitar Jerusalem. Another example of lack of complete integration is the criticism of Israeli-Arab athletes that do not sing the Israeli national anthem (Sorek, 2003), as the lyrics of "HaTikva" (the hope) express "Jewish-Zionist longing for an independent nation-state" (Tamir & Bernstein, 2015, p. 749). Israeli-Arab athletes are dominant in Israeli football and represent Israel in

national teams games. Thus, on one hand, they are seen standing during the national anthem, competing under the Israeli flag that has a Star of David in the middle and respecting Israeli symbols. On the other hand, they are also seen not singing the lyrics of the national anthem. According to Tamir and Bernstein (2015), “Jewish fans who consider the Israeli team a national symbol have voiced their protest over the fact that Arab footballers do not identify with the team’s symbols and by extension, with the country either” (p. 754).

Participants in this study reflected mostly on the positive sides of inclusions of Israeli-Arab athletes, but also emphasized the importance of using national symbols for Israel’s collective identity and also to brand Israel as a normal country. Symbols contribute to the creation of a collective national identity (David & Bar-Tal, 2009) and of a nation brand (Olins, 2002). By standing during the Israeli national anthem but not singing the lyrics, Israeli-Arab athletes emphasize that duality, of both representing and showcasing Israel as a normal country that plays football, also raises questions about the Israeli-Arab dispute, which once again ties Israel back to the conflict.

Although gender was not a major theme in this study, participants discussed influential women in Israeli sports and in Israeli history. Because of Israeli traditions and the centrality of the Israeli army and the masculine values associated with it (Lemish, 2002), women have been portrayed as wives and mothers and have been underrepresented in the Israeli public sphere. In the male-dominated world of sports, this is even more evident (Bernstein & Galily, 2008). Tamir and Galily (2010) argued, “the condition of women’s sports in Israel, in terms of their representation and participation, is

less developed than in the Western world” (p. 94). However, Israeli women played an important role in building the country and in the world of sports (Galily, Lidor, & Ben Porat, 2009; Harif, 2011; Tamir & Galily, 2010). Participants mentioned numerous groundbreaking female athletes such as Esther Rot Shachamorov who is reached the 1976 Olympic Games athletics final, Yael Arad the first Israeli Olympic medalist, Yarden Gerbi who won an Olympic medal in Rio de Janeiro and several others. The participant from the Gymnastics Federation also said that Israel used hosting the 2015 European Championship in Rhythmic Gymnastics to celebrate Israeli women, not on in athletics but their contribution to society.

This shows that Israel is trying to use hosting certain sports events to show inclusion of women, not only in athletics but in every sphere of society. By emphasizing the inclusion of women, Israeli sports organizations position Israel alongside western norms, rather than with fundamental regimes that oppress women. The focus on strong women, including having women in the Israeli army, having a female prime minister, a Nobel Prize winner and a famous poet who modernized the Hebrew language, positions Israel as an innovating country and the innovative gene in Israeli history and character (Senor & Singer, 2009). The focus on Adam and Eve corresponds with the campaign of “Land of Creation,” which emphasizes the rich history of Israel and the connection to monotheistic religions. This, of course, is another example of how a ceremony at a sports event could be used for cultural diplomacy and sports diplomacy (Arning, 2013).

Symbolism plays a significant role in Israel’s image. First and Avraham (2011) analyzed Israel’s collective identity, arguing that it is represented in advertisements by

using national symbols and through meanings of iconic famous places, such as Jerusalem as a historical city and Tel-Aviv as a global city. Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of national symbols, referring mostly to the Israeli flag and playing the Israeli national anthem. According to First and Avraham (2011), the national flag is a manifestation of Israeli Patriotism and unity, but also as a way to remember fallen Israelis. First and Avraham (2011) argued that when the conflict escalates into violence “the Israeli flag was raised proudly over all government buildings and served as a kind of bandage dressing the national wound” (p. 342). Results of this study show the importance of Israeli sports organizations to hold ceremonies to remember the athletes that were murdered in the terror attack in Munich. Showing national symbols in sports events is not taken for granted in Israel. Participants reflected on political issues with Arabic and Muslim countries that refuse to allow Israeli athletes to compete with Israeli symbol. They also mentioned security concerns that prevent delegations to maximize the potential of exposure when competing abroad. Thus, participating and using sports to have the Israeli flag raised and in the rare occasions of having the Israeli anthem “HaTikva” played have special significance for Israeli sports organizations. Both members of governmental ministries and of sports organizations, reflected on the importance of winning and improving achievements as ways to better represent Israel and reaching larger audiences who will associate Israeli symbols with winning athletes.

Alfasi and Fenster (2005) also gave symbolic meanings to the two most influential cities in Israel: Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. Jerusalem is mostly associated with history, conflict and religious connections to Judaism, Christianity, and Israel, whereas

Tel-Aviv is associated with modernity, freedom, innovation, economics, and culture. Participants in the study discussed the importance of using national symbol to represent Israel and the use of Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem to attract different target audiences. Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv play a symbolic role in the creation of Israel's collective identity (Alfasi, & Fenster, 2005). Participants from governmental ministries and from sports organizations understand these meanings and what they represent for foreign audiences. Members from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism discussed the branding campaign of Israel as "Land of Creation." This slogan has double meanings, as it shows Israel as a country of creativity, innovation, and high technology, but also a historical place where the three main monotheistic religions were created. This campaign uses different names, including a tourism vacation slogan "Two Cities, One Break - Tel-Aviv & Jerusalem" (Ministry of Tourism, 2017). Participants discussed the symbolic meanings of the two cities and how they use them to better showcase Israel, especially when hosting sport events.

Participants reflected on the importance of Tel-Aviv because of its central location, but also because of the culture and the freedom atmosphere associated with the city. The participant from the Athletics Association discussed a closing party, the participant from the Judo Association recalled sitting with a famous football player on the beach, and the participant from the Volleyball Association discussed the symbolic potential of the city to a sport such as beach volleyball. The participant from the Volleyball Association said, "in Tel-Aviv there is an atmosphere of freedom that is very inviting for sport." According to the participant from the Basketball Association, hosting

sports events showed that “Tel-Aviv is a normal city.” These all compliment the attempts of Tel-Aviv’s Municipality to brand the city as a global city (Tel-Aviv Startup City, 2016).

While Tel-Aviv is a symbol of freedom, modernity, and secularization, that is trying to brand itself outside of the Israeli-Arabic dispute, Jerusalem is a historical city, significant to all three monotheistic religions and that is in the core of conflict. Participants in this study discussed how their organizations used the uniqueness of the city to leave a lasting impression on delegations and administrators. As demonstrated in Theme 2: *Hosting in the Country*, participants discussed having daily tours during the competitions. They organize or subsidize different tours during competitions, and delegations with more religious affiliations are taken to Jerusalem, Nazareth, and historical places while delegations that want fun days on the beach, shopping or night life, are taken to Tel-Aviv. Participants acknowledged that especially for Christians who are looking for a religious experience, visiting Jerusalem left a lasting memory. In addition, Jerusalem was very central for the Maccabiah Organization. The Maccabiah Movement uses the Maccabiah Games to bring Jewish people to Jerusalem and to strengthen the connection between Jewish communities in the Diaspora and the capital of Israel.

Another manifestation of symbolism in the context of Israel’s public diplomacy was the importance of commemoration. Commemoration and bereavement contribute to Israel’s national identity (Weiss, 1997). Idolizing the fallen creates historical link between Zionist ideology, Judaism, and the land of Israel. The participant from the NOC

of Israel discussed this link when emphasizing the importance of remembering the Munich Victims. The representative of the Maccabiah Movement discussed the significance of commemoration in the Opening Ceremony of the Maccabiah Games, making connections between Jewish people from the Diaspora to the State of Israel.

The Israeli obsession on commemoration (Weiss, 1997) has socializing effects of creating a common collective identity and connecting the Zionist movement and Jewish people to the State of Israel, but also impacts Israel's image of being associated with an armed conflict (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006). Commemoration also plays a significant role in Israeli sports internally and externally. Participants reflected on Israeli national teams not competing on memorial days such as Yom HaShoah, The Holocaust Memorial Day and Yom HaZikaron, the Memorial Days for Fallen Soldiers and Terror Victims.

The most significant manifestation of commemoration was the commemoration of the Eleven Munich Victims—the eleven Israeli athletes, coaches and referees that were murdered in a terror attack in the 1972 Munich Olympic Games.

The constant focus on the commemoration of the Munich Victims is a double edged sword for Israel's public diplomacy. On one hand, having a commemoration ceremony of the Olympic Village is being portrayed in Israel as a diplomatic achievement, and the reconciled relations with the IOC might be a step towards shifting the focus on these relations from terrorism to positive collaborations. Moreover, international commemorations give Israel branding opportunities as being a peace-seeking country facing terrorism. The repeating ceremonies give Israeli politicians an opportunity to advocate for Israel and against Palestinian resistance and position Israel in

front of international audiences together with the Western World, as a country facing global terrorism. On the other hand, these ceremonies force the Olympic movement to address the controversial concept of terrorism (Giulianotti & Klausner, 2012). Having a commemoration ceremony in every Olympic Games keeps Israel in a position that challenges the peaceful philosophy of the Olympic Movement (Simri & Polidoro, 2002), and keeps the discussion around Israel in a context of war and conflict and not as a “normal” country participating in a global celebration. The different ways fallen athletes and soldiers are commemorated in Israel and abroad reflect the obsession Israel has with commemoration (Zerubavel, 2014). It also shows the role of commemoration not only in shaping Israel’s national identity (Weiss, 1997) and the connection between Zionism and the State of Israel, but also in Israel’s public diplomacy.

The Maccabiah Movement uses the games as a way to connect Jewish communities from the Diaspora to the Israeli ethos and the military ethos mostly through the opening and closing ceremonies. The Israeli Paralympic Committee is another sports organization with strong connections between the activities of the organization and the Israeli military. Israel was a Paralympic powerhouse and pioneer partly because of innovative ways of rehabilitation to wounded soldiers and war veterans (Brittain & Hutzler, 2009). Israel had a reputation of being an innovating country in sports for people with disabilities in the early decades of the Paralympic Movement. However, as more countries showed interest in the games and as the games transitioned from focusing on rehabilitation to focusing on high competitiveness, Israel’s place in the movement has deteriorated. Results of this study show that the Paralympic Movement still plays a role

in Israel's public diplomacy. Because of the prolonged conflict and the numerous wars and rounds of violence Israel has been going through, sports and physical activity still play a role in the rehabilitation process of wounded soldiers. There are several public organizations affiliated with the Israeli ministry that directly or indirectly collaborate with Paralympic Committee of Israel. Moreover, Paralympic athletes are being used by Israeli governmental ministries to share their stories and even to fundraise for Israel. The military component and the ideals of heroism are reflected through athletes who were injured during combat. The Paralympic Committee is not only relevant to Israel's public diplomacy because of wounded soldiers. Messages such as re-inventing yourself, resilience, and pushing through struggles, which identify the branding of Israel as an ever-adapting "Start Up Nation" (Senor & Singer, 2009) are also found in Paralympic athletes who are not associated with the Israeli military.

Sports, body culture, image, and Zionism come together in the concept of Muscular Judaism (Kaufman and Galily, 2009). The concept represents a change in the Jewish image and the creation of a strong Jewish person that will physically contribute to the creations of a Jewish homeland (Harif, 2011). Whereas the concept was coined in the late nineteenth century (Kaufman and Galily, 2009), the idea of strengthening the connection between Jewish communities and the State of Israel and even encouraging Jewish people from the Diaspora to the State of Israel through sports, is still very much alive through the Maccabiah Games. While the importance and the athletic significance of the Maccabiah Games have reduced over the years (Galily, 2009), this study shows that the Maccabiah Movement still has a very important role in Israel's foreign policy,

public diplomacy and nation branding. Unlike other sports organizations, the Maccabiah World Union and the Maccabiah Games work together with Israeli governmental agencies to promote Zionism ideology and improve the image of Israel. The main manifestation of the efforts are in a quadrennial international multi-sport event, where the athletic component is less significant than the diplomatic one. Participants from both governmental agencies and sports organizations emphasized the collaboration needed and the uniqueness of these games. Participant G from the Maccabiah Movement also discussed the importance of the Maccabiah implementing educational programs abroad, thus strengthening Israel's advocacy with Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Participant G further emphasized the connection with European Jewish communities through the European Maccabiah Games, which has implications for fighting Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe or having emotional moments marching the *Olympiastadion* in Berlin in 2015. A symbol of victory of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, marching proudly with the Israeli flag, playing the Israeli national anthem, in the same stadium where Nazi Germany hosted the 1936 Olympic Games.

While over a hundred countries have football associations, national Olympic Committees and other sports associations and federations, the Maccabiah Games and the Maccabiah Games are unique to Israel (Galily, 2009). The movement and the games are rooted in the foundation of the Zionist movement and of the State of Israel (Kaufman & Galily, 2009). While participants from other sports associations said that their organizations focus on sports and are not engaged in Israeli official foreign policies, they indicated that the Maccabiah Movement does. This study discussed the Maccabiah as a

sports organization; however, according to Participant G from the Maccabiah, the games and the movement are funded by various public organizations and collaborate with different Israeli, Jewish, and Zionist organizations to improve Israel's public diplomacy. The Maccabiah collaborates with various governmental agencies and with sports associations. While other sports organizations shy away from advocacy, the Maccabiah Movement holds seminars, programs and activities in Israel and abroad fighting BDS, educating about Israel and advocating for Israel. The Maccabiah takes an active role in Israel's public diplomacy, reaching Jewish communities and non-Jewish communities in dozens of countries (Galily, 2009).

Gilboa (2006) and Avraham (2009) argued that Israel's image is associated with an armed conflict and suggests various tactics of how to improve Israel's diplomacy and the branding of Israel. The Maccabiah Movement addressed both. The Maccabiah Games emphasize heroism idealism (Weiss, 1977) through commemoration, celebrating the success of the Israeli military through events, and ceremonies and using wounded soldiers who compete in the games or represent Israel in the Paralympic Games as role models. The Maccabiah Movement also focuses on bypassing messages, such as showing different sides of Israel, improving tourism, and organizing cultural events. Neorealists (Lergo, & Moravcesik, 1999) will see the importance of the Games as having a role in Israel's foreign policy, emphasizing security, creating an image of strong Jewish people. Neoliberals (Keohane & Martin, 1995) will see the importance of the Maccabiah Movement as an international movement, connecting dozens of Jewish communities

around the world, creating ambassadors and influencing makers, and collaborating with governmental and non-governmental agencies.

The Maccabiah Games use national symbols of Israel, emphasize the connection between Jewish people and the State of Israel, but also use sport as an opportunity to showcase Israel's diversity by including non-Jewish athletes in the Israeli delegation. Although the athletic significance of the games has been on the decline (Galily, 2009), and the level of the games is perceived with a certain amount of cynicism in Israel and even by Israeli sports organizations, Jewish athletes still make Aliyah through the games, finding ways to represent Israel and at times still improve Israeli sports. By focusing mostly on Jewish communities, the Maccabiah Games might be perceived as preaching to the choir. These games, however, are unique to Israel and provide branding and diplomatic opportunities that sports organizations in Israel cannot.

Avraham (2009) analyzed the case of Israel and came up with recommendations of how to manage nation branding, during prolonged conflict: (a) attempting to influence the media, (b) putting pressure on the media, (c) blocking the media, (d) replacing the media, (e) using the film industry, (f) using celebrities and opinion leaders, (g) come see for yourself, (h) use the internet as an alternative to the media, (i) conveying opposite to the problematic image characteristics, (j) multiple facets, human touch and softening the 'hard image', (k) branding opposite to the stereotype, (l) ridicule the stereotype, (m) emphasis on similarities and relevance, (n) using familiar cultural symbols, and (o) association with strong brands. In this study, participants addressed several of the recommendations. For example, in Theme 3: *Representation*, participants addressed the

importance of using national symbols. Participants reflected on the charming Israeli character and showing a human touch. In Theme 2: *Hosting Sports Events*, participants addressed the use of famous athletes who come to Israel as influencers and new ambassadors. In this theme participants also discussed different impacts of bringing journalists to Israel, and having them experience the country and showing different sides of the country or focus on different angles such as love or social mobility (Mochizuki, 2015; Montague, 2017).

There are other examples of activities that correspond with Avraham's (2009) recommendations. However, most of these activities are not a result of a formal strategy. For example, participants acknowledged the importance of the internet, giving examples of the opportunities of having athletes expose the country through social media, broadcast competitions online or the threat of not having Israeli symbols on official websites of competitions that are held in Arabic countries. The potential is not maximized, however, because there is not a coherent and communicated sports diplomacy strategy of how to use the internet for public diplomacy and nation branding purposes,. Moreover, the different messages about the Israeli-Arabic dispute—whether trying to bypass it, ridicule it, or show opposite sides—are also not coherently conveyed. Participants discussed different ad-hoc activities such as collaborations with different countries or programs that are intended to bridge between communities and different sectors of the population which give a positive spin to the Israeli-Arabic dispute. Participants also discussed collaborations with the state, especially when hosting sport events that embody branding opportunities such as having promotional videos of Israeli tourism during international

broadcasts. However, the lack of communication and the lack of coherent strategy prevent Israeli sports from using more sophisticated strategies for public diplomacy and nation branding purposes. Gilboa (2006) criticized Israel for not having a clear public diplomacy in its foreign policy. Similarly, based on the findings of this study, Israel does not appear to have a clear sports diplomacy strategy.

Theoretical and Conceptual Implications

For the purpose of this study, I defined public diplomacy as the communications and interactions by governments, organizations, policy makers, and individuals to create a favorable image of a nation and to influence foreign publics that will eventually influence their own governments (Cull, 2008; Gilboa, 2006; Nye, 2008; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). This traditional definition of public diplomacy assumes that although public diplomacy is done by organizations and individuals, it is eventually tied to foreign policy conducted by the government (Wang, 2006a). Sports associations in Israel are politically independent from the Israeli government, thus, most participants from Israeli sports organizations said they are not engaged in Israel's official public diplomacy and that there is no political interference by the government. The only exception is the Maccabiah Movement which does fulfill official public diplomacy goals of the State of Israel. The Maccabiah Games and the Maccabiah Movement are unique to the case of Israel, because this organization was founded based on Zionist ideology (Kaufman & Galily, 2009), and they do engage in Israel's public diplomacy and serve Israel's foreign policy goals.

Cull (2010) argued that for public diplomacy to be effective, there should be emphasis on communication, listening, and for the diplomacy to be tied to real policies.

Several participants said that they did not even know Israel's foreign policies or goals. While representatives of most sports organizations emphasized they want to keep their autonomy from the government, separate sports from politics, and focus on improving athletic performances, participants from sports organizations also argued that with better communication with governmental agencies, perhaps more collaborations could be established. These examples contribute to the knowledge of public diplomacy as they exemplify tightrope that sports organizations walk. On one hand, these organizations are financially depended on the country and rely on governmental support, especially when the conflict escalates. On the other hand, most sports organizations have policies of not having political interference, trying to separate sports from international politics and focus on professional goals and improving achievements. While this study focuses on the situation in Israel, these components of diplomatic collaborations apply to other contexts as well, especially for countries in other prolonged conflicts. Israel is not the only country that a conflict has impacted its sports diplomacy. The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) stripped Ukraine from hosting the 2015 EuroBasket claiming it was not feasible to host the tournament because of security issues and the political situation in the country (Anderson, 2014). Another example is the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Due to a travel ban between the countries, UEFA, the Union of European Football Associations, puts restrictions in draws, so the national teams from the two countries will not meet (UEFA, 2018). While I focus on Israel, through this study I gave dozens of examples how the Israeli-Arabic conflict impacts them as well, and requires them to adapt their sports diplomacy.

While public diplomacy originates in international relations, nation branding relates most closely to marketing (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993; Olins, 2002) and does not necessarily depend on foreign policy (Fan, 2010). This study shows sports organizations have more agency in the branding of Israel than in public diplomacy. Participants from sports organizations reflected on the importance of representing Israel well and leaving a good impression of Israel. These comments, however, were not related to governmental policies. Olins (2002) emphasized the use of symbols when branding a nation, with the flag being an example of a symbol that differentiates one nation from another, representing different images and ethos. Participants in the study discussed in depth the role of national symbols and especially the Israeli flag and the Israeli national anthem. Participants emphasized the pride of having the flag raised and the outrage when Israeli athletes and delegations are prevented from these branding opportunities.

Successful nation branding needs to represent real characteristics of a country (Nye, 2008) for example reflecting the culture, the political system, and the economy rather than just being a strategy made up in an advertising firm. When analyzing nation branding, researchers have used two main foci: products associated with a place (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 1993; Johansson, 1989) and the place as a tourism destination (Kang, & Purdue, 1994; Nadeau et al., 2008). From a product-based approach, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs is building its branding strategy based on Israel's creative energy, focusing on Israel's high technology. The branding of Israel as a start-up nation (Senor & Singer, 2009) is rooted in a history of constant adaptation and innovation that enabled Israel to survive and even technologically thrive in ever-changing adverse context. Being

in a lengthy conflict has negative implications for a country's image and with the association of its products (Heslop, Lu & Cray, 2008; Klein, Ettenson & Morris, 2008). However, because Israel's technology is world-known (Doron, 2011), Israel is branded as a start-up nation (Gazit & Sauber, 2014) associated with advanced technology. As discussed previously, the Israeli-Arabic dispute is reflected in Israeli sports and negatively influences Israel's image. Yet, unlike other areas in Israeli technology, sports do not manage to create a bypassing message to the conflict through Israeli products. Most participants discussed limited affiliations with Israeli products, mostly mentioning very few Israeli sponsors that receive limited international exposure. While there are some Muslim and Arabic countries that manage to brand themselves through sponsoring western sports teams and sports events (Thani & Heenan, 2017), Israel is not able to match them. The cost is too high and international sports clubs are less receptive to be associated with Israeli sponsors. For Israel to have more exposure and a better image through sports, the key would be to improve athletic achievements.

Participants from Israeli sports organizations recognize the opportunity of being associated with high technology when it comes to sports. They reflected on several Israeli technologies related to sports that were sold to international corporations, especially related to statistical analysis or broadcasting. However, Israeli sports organizations are very much behind the rest of the world and do not live up to the reputation of Israel as a high technological and innovative country. Participants from Israeli governmental ministries expressed their will to further collaborate with Israeli sports about the branding of Israel as a "SportTech Nation." The NOC also recognized this opportunity. By having

successful collaboration between the state and sports organizations, Israeli technologies could be exposed to international audiences through sports events. Start-up companies that aim to sell their technologies to international corporations will receive international exposure. Israel's reputation as an innovative country and a technological powerhouse would be reinforced and Israeli sports would improve. This is a branding opportunity recognized by the participants and rooted in Israel's reality being a high technological country and having a history of adaptation and innovation (Senor & Singer, 2009); however participants also acknowledged that Israel is not there yet.

In destination-oriented branding, nations try to have an attractive image to attract potential tourists (Nadeau et al., 2008). Categories commonly analyzed focus on the attractions, the scenery, the culture, the nature, the history, the reputation of the people and the economy, and the political climate (Nadeau et al., 2008; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). Participants in this study discussed different ways of how Israel is being portrayed as a tourism destination. "Land of Creation," the branding campaign by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, embodies a double meaning that is rooted in the history and culture of Israel. Creation in the sense of creativity and innovation was also reflected through the product-based analytic approaches, and the opportunity to brand Israel as a "SportTech Nation." The second meaning (i.e., Israel being an ancient land where the three main monotheistic religions were created) is reflected through Israel's rich history. Participants from sports organizations recognized the branding potential of Israel as a tourism destination, especially when hosting sport events. Participants discussed different tactics such as

organizing tours to religious places such as Jerusalem and Nazareth, to attractive unique sceneries such as the beaches or the Dead Sea, and exposing the lifestyle and culture of Tel-Aviv. The interviewees also reflected on how officials, athletes, and tourists who came to Israel for sports events, enjoyed the engagement with Israelis by emphasizing Israeli character as fun, professional, problem-solving and good hosts. Participants said that their organizations exposed Israeli culture through the participation of Israelis abroad and through opening and closing ceremonies in events hosted in Israel. Another way of exposing Israel through hosting sports events was having clips about Israel broadcasted on international networks that broadcasted the competitions to international audiences.

Historical places and rich culture are among the most important factors in place branding research when analyzing the equity of a place as a tourism destination (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Nadeau et al., 2008). The “Land of Creation” campaigns, the emphasis on Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, and on other iconic places such as the Dead Sea show the attractiveness of Israel. Israeli sports organizations do manage to show potential of branding Israel as a tourism destination (Nadeau et al., 2008), using sports to show attractive sides of the country, the culture, and the character of the people. Most participants said that Israeli sponsors and Israeli products are not exposed through their organizations. Thus, Israeli sports organization have limited impact on improving the branding of Israeli products (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 1993; Johansson, 1989). Implementing a strategy of branding Israel a “SportTech Nation” might change that.

Participants from both governmental ministries and from sports organizations recognized the potential of sports to brand Israel through targeting participation in sports

and popular sports. Participants from governmental ministries and sports organizations gave examples of some of Israel's relative advantages for hosting participation-sports events such as marathons, cycling and even golf. Examples of these advantages include Israel's iconic places and the convenient weather over the winter when outdoor sports in Europe are very limited. Focusing on participation sports means focusing not only on bringing top athletes to compete in Israel, but on targeting a larger audience that is will not get international coverage but is wealthy and will spend money in Israel. This requires a shift of priorities by some of the sports organizations, either to focus on non-professional sports to brand their events differently or to integrate popular sports into their current schedule.

National identity is a self-categorizing process of defining oneself as a social group that has specific meanings and differentiates that group from others (David & Bar-Tal, 2009). Unlike public diplomacy and nation branding that target foreign audiences (Anholt, 2010; Fan, 2010), national identity has internal purposes shaping a collective identity of the members of the group (David & Bar-Tal, 2009). Participants from sports organizations and governmental agencies discussed national identity, which is a specific example of collective identity (David & Bar-Tal, 2009). Sports organizations emphasized the diversity of Israeli society and how national teams reflect the melting pot of Israeli society. Participants also emphasized the importance to represent Israel well, in terms of discipline and behavior, so Israeli athletes and teams will be invited back.

In some cases, the branding of Israel, whether through Israeli products or as tourism destination, was done in collaboration with governmental ministries. However,

members of sports associations see themselves responsible for showing Israel in positive ways and emphasized policies that shape Israel's collective identity and are reflected abroad. The focus on positive branding of Israel and on shaping a collective identity, were not only orchestrated by the government, but by the sports organizations themselves and by individual athletes and coaches. These examples show how sports organizations in a country that is going through an extended conflict could contribute to the image of the country, without being forced to engage in controversial and distancing political advocacy.

Nye (2004) coined the term soft power as a non-military way to achieve goals in world politics. The two main approaches in international relations are neorealism and neoliberalism (Powell, 1994). While the neorealist approach focuses on the state as the unit of analysis and its key goal is survival and military force (Lergo, & Moravcesik, 1999), neoliberals put more emphasis on collaborations, international institutions, and trade (Keohane & Martin, 1995). As realist perspectives regards the military component as the most important one for survival, soft power plays a lesser role in this paradigm. Moreover, because in neorealism the state is a unitary actor (Lergo, & Moravcesik, 1999), different internal groups, such as sports organizations receive less importance. Through this study, the neorealist theoretical approach is reflected whenever Israeli sports organizations face security threats. Participants from Israeli sports organizations acknowledged they are missing branding opportunities by not showing Israeli symbols or holding cultural events during Olympic Games, because of security reasons. When the State of Israel faces a security dilemma, sports receive a lesser priority even if it means

missing different branding opportunities. The Munich Massacre in the 1972 Olympic Games and the multiple commemorations in Israel and abroad reinforce a necessity of having a pragmatic realistic approach when it comes to security. Several participants argued that by changing national priorities, such as putting less emphasis on security and using the money to host sport events or collaborate in joint hosting with the Palestinians, Israel could open itself to new branding and diplomatic opportunities. The realist approach, which prioritizes security on everything else and sees war as a state of nature (Keohane, 1986), is also manifested in the critics of Israel's public diplomacy and nation branding strategies, keeping the discussion around Israel about a distancing armed conflict (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006).

Neoliberalism applies to this study, as participants discussed the importance of having influence in international associations (Keohane & Martin, 1995). Having Israeli representatives in international sports federations or having influential administrators, help Israeli sports when bidding for hosting sports events, when needing diplomatic support against countries that do not allow Israelis to show national symbols, or when needing rescheduling events when they fall on religious or national holidays.

Neoliberalism also emphasizes the importance of non-governmental organizations that encourage collaborations. Neoliberalism applies to this study, as participants discussed the potential of collaborations through international organizations and organizations for sports and development for peace.

While the military component is dominant in Israel's image (Gilboa, 2006), there are soft power opportunities also for countries going through extended conflicts

(Avraham, 2009). One of the ways soft power is used for public diplomacy purposes is through culture (Nye, 2004). With sports being part of cultural diplomacy (Szondi, 2010), countries have used sports for soft power purposes to achieve branding and diplomatic goals (Arning, 2013; Chalip, & Costa, 2005; Preuss, 2015). Among the main examples of using sports for soft power purposes are opening ceremonies of Olympic Games (Arning, 2013), hosting sport events (Chalip, & Leyns, 2002; Heslop, et al., 2010; Laroche et al., 2003; Nadeau, et al., 2008), through peaceful collaborations (Carter & Sugden, 2011), or through participation and creating an imagined community where the athletes represent nations of millions (Hobsbawm, 1992).

Throughout this study, participants mentioned ways in which their organizations influenced these issues. They also noted the challenges they face. The interviewees discussed showing Israeli culture and history through trips and ceremonies. However, Israel's ability to host sport events is very limited and mostly restricted to secondary events in European federations that have limited economic impact on tourism. While there are examples of collaborations such as between Israel and Jordan or using sports to bridge between Jewish and Arabic communities, the constant boycotts (Reiche, 2018) and political incidents, prevent Israeli from having a "ping pong diplomacy" moment (Carter & Sugden, 2011). Participants acknowledged the diplomatic and branding opportunities of representing Israel, however political incidents and especially the lack of top level Israeli athletes, prevent Israeli sport from having influence on the way governmental offices see their potential for influencing Israel's public diplomacy.

Participants from sports organizations repeatedly discussed how different Arabic and Muslim countries, especially from the Arabic Gulf, managed to use sports for improving their image, through governmental investments in sponsoring westerns sports teams and through hosting prestigious sports events (Brannagan, & Giulianotti, 2015; Thani & Heenan, 2017). While participants complained that these countries are using their influence in the world of sports against Israel, there was also a certain tone of jealousy that small countries, with contested regimes, which do not have a reputation of producing excellent athletes, manage to successfully become more dominant international players. Israel is not following the same tactics of spending hundreds of millions dollars to host prestigious world championships, for sponsoring foreign sports clubs or having a strategy to bid for costly Olympic Games.

Examples of how the Israeli government officially collaborates with sports organizations for public diplomacy purposes include the use of Paralympic athletes as official ambassadors or speakers in fundraising events, as well as the financial, logistical and diplomatic support in commemoration ceremonies of the Munich Victims. Of course the most significant collaboration between the Israeli government and Israeli sports for public diplomacy and nation branding is through the Maccabiah Games and the Maccabiah Movement. For example, participants discussed how the Maccabiah Games were used for Israel's public diplomacy was the connection of the games to Jerusalem. Countries that hosted Olympic Games used the Opening Ceremonies to showcase their culture, history, technology, and "project their soft power" (Arning, 2013, p. 539). Israel has been doing that through the Maccabiah Games. The Opening Ceremony of the 2017

Maccabiah Games focused on 50 years to the unification of Jerusalem since the 1967 War. The ceremony included songs and cultural references to Jerusalem. The organization of the Maccabiah emphasized Jerusalem being the capital of Israel and the importance of Jerusalem to the Jewish people through ceremonies, tours, and other activities. The Maccabiah Games also give importance to the Israeli military, to commemoration and even holds the closing ceremony in the Armor Corps Site, where participants could see the different tanks around them. Through the Maccabiah Games Israel's hard power and soft power are exposed to foreign audiences. Nye (2008) described the combination of soft power and hard power as smart power.

According to Murray (2012) sports diplomacy offers governments an alternative channel to form relationships. Murray (2012) argued that "sports does so in a unique fashion: by demonstrating that people share affinity through a love of sports" (p. 588). Several participants in this study resonated with Murray's argument, saying that sports bring people together, giving example of Jewish and Arab children playing together or even sharing personal experiences. Participants from both governmental offices and sports organizations believed that the love for sports is universal. While that understanding was shared, participants did not discuss joined activities with the government. Moreover, Murray (2012) warned about using sports as "a gimmick, or a photo-op" (p. 589). Good public diplomacy needs to be rooted in sound policies (Cull, 2010). The same goes to sports diplomacy.

According to Pigman (2014), another cultural channel that governments use for public diplomacy is sending athletes as ambassadors. While Israel does not have many

top athletes who are recognized on a global level, the participant from the Paralympic Committee and the participant from the Foreign Ministry both discussed the use of Israeli Paralympic athletes for diplomatic purposes. For example, Tal Brody, who became a goodwill ambassador by the State of Israel (Sofer, 2010). Brody made Aliyah after competing in the Maccabiah Games in the 1960s and was Maccabi Tel-Aviv's captain when the club won its first European Cup in 1977. Brody's famous saying—"We are on the map and we're staying on the map, not only in sports but in everything" after beating Soviet giants CSKA Moscow (Weitzman, 2016)—is one of the most known quotes in Israeli culture. Participants from numerous sports organizations discussed the significance of Brody as a symbol for the success of the Maccabiah Games and as someone who improved Israeli sports and became an ambassador for Israel and for the Maccabiah Movement. Several times, Brody was mentioned together with David Blatt, another American-Jewish basketball player who made Aliyah through the Maccabiah Games. Blatt had a successful coaching career, leading Maccabi Tel-Aviv to win the European Cup in 2014 and then coaching the Cleveland Cavaliers in the NBA. The participant from the Maccabiah Games said, "They [Tal Brody and David Blatt] are very, very good ambassadors of ours. Whenever we need them, they are there."

There are ethical concerns about the use of sports for soft power purposes (Boykoff, 2016; Coakley, 2015a). The impact of international politics on sports is not unique to Israel. In Ancient Greece athletic competitions were used for political purposes (Coakley, 2015a; Miller, 2004). Governments, pressure groups, and individuals have used sports for a variety of soft power purposes. These purposes include leveraging

tourism , making political statements, showing different sides of the country, exposing the culture (Arning, 2013) promoting products and technologies, shaping the countries' image (Chalip & Costa, 2005; Preuss, 2015) and for different international relations purposes (Guttmann, 2002). On one hand, a positive example of sports diplomacy is *Ping Pong Diplomacy* (Carter & Sugden, 2011), when the United States and China formed relations after having a friendly table tennis game between delegates. The Olympic Movement emphasizes the concept of *Ekecheiria* (Does, 2014), the declared truce between City-States in Ancient Greece. The movement also emphasizes the philosophy of Olympism (International Olympic Committee, 2015) which aspires to promote educational values through sports and rejects any sort of discrimination. On the other hand, aspirations of governments and of different pressure groups to use sports to improve their images and reach political goals, manifested in negative and even catastrophic outcomes (Boykoff, 2016; Coakley, 2015a). Some of these outcomes include public spending (Coakley, 2015a) and financial debts (Boykoff, 2016), mass boycotts (Boykoff, 2016; Guttmann, 2002), systematic doping systems (Guttmann, 2002), destruction of the environment (Boykoff & Mascarenhas, 2016), and even different manifestations of violence (Galily, Yarchi & Tamir, 2015). Different regimes have used sports for political purposes, including some of the most democratic countries. Examples include the United States and Canada (Boykoff, 2016) and authoritarian regimes such as the Soviet Union and China (Boykoff, 2016; Guttmann, 2002). Yet, the most deadly implication of the use of sports was by Adolf Hitler, who used the 1936 Olympic Games

in Berlin to unite Germany behind the leadership National Socialist Party and to promote the racist Nazi propaganda (Boykoff, 2016; Guttman, 2002).

Results of this study show that while Israel is trying to comply with universal values (Dart, 2016), the reality is that Israel cannot afford to blindly believe in the preached Olympic Values (International Olympic Committee, 2015). The terror in Munich, where terrorists sneaked into the Olympic Village dressed as athletes, murdering unarmed Israeli athletes, contradicts everything the values the Olympic Movement tries to be associated with. Israel has been using the Munich Massacre as a channel for advocacy. Recently an official commemoration ceremony was held in the Olympic Village in Rio de Janeiro and a new commemoration monument for the Munich Victims was inaugurated outside the Olympic Stadium in Munich (Aderet, 2017). However, constant focus on grief and commemoration positions Israel in a corner where it is mentioned in the context of an armed dispute, rather than being associated as any other country in the context of the global celebration of the Olympic Games. Moreover, the deterioration of the image of Israel and the association of Israel as the occupier (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006), the contested definitions of terrorism (Giulianotti & Klausner, 2012), and the growing influence of rich Muslim countries in global sports (Thani & Heenan, 2017) enable some of the political manifestations that hurt Israel's potential to use sports for public diplomacy to continue.

While there is no doubt that the conflict impacts sports in Israel, compared to how sports is used for political purposes in other countries, Israel is a minor player.

Participants in this study said that Israel is unwilling to spend hundreds of millions of

dollars on sponsoring foreign clubs or dozens of billions of dollars to host sports events like in the United States, China, Russia, or the Gulf countries (Boykoff, 2016; Coakley, 2015a; Thani & Heenan, 2017). Not only Israel does not run a systematic doping system like other countries (Kretchmar et al., 2017), but no Israeli athlete has even been caught doping in the Olympic Games. Israeli athletes might suffer from boycotts, but with the exception of joining the U.S. lead boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games (Afek, 1994a), Israel has a policy of competing against everyone. The United States, Russia, Qatar and many other countries have been associated with bribing scandals in the bidding for hosting the Olympic Games, FIFA World Cups and other international sports events (Boykoff, 2016; Sugden & Tomlinson, 2017) that had global implications.

According to Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015), one aspect that influences a country's image is the normative dimension. According to Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015), "the normative country image dimension, which covers beliefs regarding the integrity of a country, is specified in relation to the country attribute of norms and values" (p. 115). Participants in the study perceived Israeli sports to be ethical and took pride in that notion. There was a common understanding that athletic achievements must be improved for Israel to be able to better use sports for public diplomacy and nation branding. In comparison to other countries, when it comes to sports, this study shows that Israel has not been willing to do everything to win at all cost. In other words, Israel puts limitations on itself, regarding how far the country is willing to go when it comes to using soft power through sports.

This study shows that even countries that go through a prolonged conflict have opportunities to use sports to normalize the image of the country and to show other sides of it. This would create bypassing messages. The impacts of these opportunities depend on the level of events the country can host, the level of athletes representing the country, and how the conflict manifests. Productive public diplomacy and nation branding must be credible and must be rooted in real policies and real characteristics of the country, rather than being just an advertising campaign that is based only on the creative imagination of a public relations firm. The agency sports organizations have in relation to the government also influences their role in a country's public diplomacy. This is especially true when it comes to foreign policy. In nation branding, sports organizations that want to maintain their independence, do have more flexibility. Yet, to improve the opportunities of how sports organizations can influence a country's public diplomacy and nation branding and to identify the right strategic collaboration, there must be fluent and constant communication between sports organizations and the state. This study also shows that whenever there is formal collaboration between the state and sports organizations, sports can become a channel for public diplomacy, sending foreign policy messages, and for branding purposes.

Significance and Contributions

This study is significant and contributes to existing knowledge on two main levels: (a) the specific case of Israel and (b) theories and conceptual frameworks on public diplomacy, nation branding, and related fields. Because there is very limited literature on the way Israel uses sports for nation branding, public diplomacy, and country image, this study has both exploratory and analytical significance for existing

knowledge. I identified five major themes (1) *The Conflict*, (2) *Hosting Sport Events*, (3) *Representation*, (4) *Relations with the State*, and (5) *Challenges and Opportunities*. All themes are significant to existing knowledge on Israel and on public diplomacy and nation branding theories.

The Conflict. Because of the impact of the Israeli-Arabic conflict on every sphere in Israeli life, there has been ample research on various implications for Israeli sports. Examples include previous work on the different political challenges in the establishment of the State of Israel (Kaufman & Galily, 2009; Harif, 2011), the Munich Massacre (Galily, Tamir & Levy, 2012), and different boycotts and exclusions (Afek, 1994a; Alperovich, 2007). This study contributes to existing knowledge by focusing on more recent events and opening a new line of research about the role of sports in Israel's nation branding and public diplomacy.

Previous research shows that countries going through a prolonged conflict suffer from distancing images (Batra et al., 2000; Laroche et al., 2003). Studies show that war creates animosity (Klein, Ettenson & Morris, 2008) and negative feelings towards a country's products (Heslop, Lu & Cray, 2008). Research on Israel's public diplomacy and nation branding (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006) suggested focusing on bypassing messages to the conflict. This study and the theme of *The Conflict* contribute to theoretical and empirical discussion about the ability of sports to be a distancing message from an ongoing conflict. Moreover, as this theme discusses the different manifestations of the conflict through different Muslim and Arabic countries, this study also contributes to the way Qatar and the Gulf Countries use sports for soft power purposes (Brannagan &

Giulianotti, 2015) to research the different roles of sports boycotts as a strategic threat (MacLean, 2014; Reiche, 2018).

Hosting Sports Events. Research on the impact of hosting sports events in Israel focused on the Maccabiah Games (Galily, 2009), on the impact of terrorism on Israel's ability to host (Galily, Tamir & Levy, 2012), and more recently about the impact of the U21 UEFA European Championship on Israel's brand (Dart, 2016). Results in this theme also reflect discussion on positive interactions international media, contributing to existing knowledge about how Israel is being portrait (Gilboa, 2008; Steinberg, 2006). This elaborates on more current events, focusing directly on how sport organizations in Israel attempt to show different sides of the country by hosting sports events. In nation branding and country image research, hosting sporting sport events are examples of how countries try to reposition themselves, improve their image, and reach different social, political and economic goals (Chalip, & Leyns, 2002; Heslop, et al., 2010; Laroche et al., 2003; Nadeau, et al., 2008). The results in this theme contribute to existing literature, by focusing on the role of hosting sports events in a country that is going through a prolonged conflict.

Representation. Various Israeli scholars have studied the role of sports in Israel's national identity (Bernstein, 2007; Kaufman, 2005; Kaufman & Galily, 2009). Results of this theme contribute to existing research on the role of Israeli athletes as ambassadors and the different representations of Israeli society through Israeli sports. The boundaries between nation branding, public diplomacy, country image, and national identity vary between scholars and also overlap (Fan, 2010). Sociology and collective identity research

also influence country image research (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015). The results of this study contribute to existing research on national identity (David & Bar-Tal, 2009) and the role of national sports teams creating an imagined community (Hobsbawm, 1992).

Relations with the State. Public diplomacy as discussed in this study is part of a country's foreign policy, meaning that it is shaped by the State (Cull, 2010; Gilboa, 2006; Nye, 2004). The ability of sports organizations to use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy very much depends on the relations, collaborations, and communications with the State. Research about the relations between the State of Israel and sports organizations shows that the political affiliation of sports associations in Israel has been fading in the last decades (Kaufman & Galily, 2009). This study contributes to the study of complex relations between sports organizations and the State of Israel. The particular theme *Relations with the State* also relates to research in international relations regarding the roles of sports organizations. While the neorealist sees the state as a unit (Lergo, & Moravcesik, 1999), the neoliberal sees importance in organizations and in international institutions (Keohane & Martin, 1995). This theme also show that Israel's sports organizations comply with the state when it comes to national security, but also do not see themselves as obligated to represent the state's foreign policy and even emphasize their independence from the state and compliance with international institutions.

Challenges and Opportunities. Although a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Arabic conflict is not in the horizon, Israel has managed to brand itself successfully as a start-up nation (Senor & Singer, 2009; Wonglimpiyarat, 2016), being a greenhouse for high-level technology (Doron, 2011) showing an appealing side of the country. By

creating a discussion about Israel's potential to brand itself as a "SportTech Nation," which fits current strategies of Israeli governmental ministries, this study contributes to current literature about the role of technology in the branding of Israel. The double meanings of the branding campaign "Land of Creation" were also considered in this study. Thus, it contributes to existing literature on place branding research (Anholt, 2010) and tourism-destination branding (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Nadeau et al., 2008).

Practical Recommendations

Improving athletic achievements, ending the control over Palestinian civilians, or reaching a peace agreement that will end the conflict, would improve Israel's sport diplomacy. The recommendations focus on practical policy changes that are in the control of sports organizations and governmental agencies in Israel. These recommendations could lead to positive outcomes of better use of sports for soft power purposes.

Develop a sports diplomacy strategy. According to Nye (2004), there are three important components to public diplomacy: (a) daily communications, (b) strategic communications, and (c) development of lasting relationships. Throughout this study, I have discussed the lack of communication between sports organizations and governmental ministries, lack of collaboration and lack of coherent sports diplomacy strategy by the State of Israel. Gilboa (2006) argued that public diplomacy is the missing component in Israel's foreign policy. This study showed that when it comes to sports, this is even more evident. Participants from governmental ministries acknowledged that sports play a minor role in the branding of Israel and some participants from sports organizations said that they do not know Israel's foreign policy. The State of Israel must

have clear long-term and short-term strategies of how to use sports for public diplomacy and nation branding. Sports organizations must know where they fit in relations to these strategies. Communication is one of the most importance components of public diplomacy (Cull, 2010). Any kind of strategy must be better communicated between the State of Israel and Israeli sports organizations. One of the main shortcomings that participants referred to was the lack of communication and lack of collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism. Two-way communication channels must be created. Having a clearly communicated sports strategy rooted in sound policies is fundamental. Without a clear strategy, Israel keeps missing branding and diplomatic opportunities.

Brand Israel as a “SportTech Nation.” Israel desperately needs successful bypassing messages to the Israeli-Arabic conflict (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006). In the context of sports, branding Israel as a “SportTech Nation” is exactly the opportunity Avraham (2009) and Gilboa (2006) referred to when arguing that countries need to find a way to send attractive messages that are not affiliated with the conflict. This is a win-win-win opportunity for the State of Israel, Israeli sports organizations, and Israeli start-up companies. Joining forces and having a collaborative strategy will improve Israel’s reputation as a start-up nation, improve Israeli sports and make athletes even better ambassadors. It would also expose Israeli technologies on a global stage which will help start-up companies to capitalize in global markets. In this study, I adopted a traditional definition of public diplomacy being shaped by the state (Cull, 2010; Gilboa, 2006; Nye, 2004). Yet, the public sector also has a role in public diplomacy (White, 2015).

Collaboration between the State of Israel, Israeli sports organizations, and Israeli start-up companies is an example of how the private sector in Israel could use sports to improve Israel's public diplomacy and nation branding.

Acknowledge the conflict and prepare for escalation. It is important to create bypassing messages to the Israeli-Arabic dispute. However, because of the significance of the conflict, disregarding it and imagining the conflict is not there, is not a feasible strategy for Israeli sports. Reality is that the Israeli-Arabic conflict is not going to be solved in the next years, which means that political incidents will continue to impact Israeli sports in years to come. Security issues will continue to concern Israeli sports. One of Gilboa's (2006) key recommendations was that "Israel must establish a highly experienced rapid response team with sufficient proficiency in various languages to present arguments to the media in a coherent and persuasive manner" (p. 743). Israeli sports organizations and the Israeli government should develop a strategy of how to act when different incidents happen. Instead of being surprised each time something happens, Israel should be ready for manifestations of the conflict through sports, and have a quick diplomatic response. Examples could be to have qualified spokespeople addressing international media and putting pressure on international organizations to sanction the other countries or resolve the issues. When the conflict escalates into violence, sport organizations and the government must have a Plan B of what to do or where to host sporting events. Because Israel does not have a clear strategy, whenever the conflict manifests through sports, it seems to catch Israel by surprise. Israel should be prepared.

Improve inclusion and emphasize diversity. Participants took pride in Israel's sports being a melting pot for Israeli society. Sports diplomacy tactic cannot be just a photo-opportunity (Murray, 2012), but it needs to be rooted in real policies. Racism in Israeli football and the lack of Israeli-Arabic athletes in the Olympic delegations need to be further addressed and more inclusive policies should be implemented. Parallel to that, the diversity of Israel's delegations and teams should be made visible internationally. Governmental agencies should make better use of Israeli athletes to show a diverse Israeli society. Also, sports organizations and Israeli governmental agencies should put more emphasis on sports for development and peace activities, programs, and organizations. These efforts should be showcased internationally. According to Nye (2004), non-governmental organizations can either compliment or complicate a country's soft power. Emphasizing the use of sports for social inclusion and promotion of universal values also fits the branding strategy of improving the world (Hassman, 2008), which has been part of the branding strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thus, in the case of Israel, the government should collaborate with sports organizations and with sports for development and peace organizations to further enhance mutual goals of promoting diversity and inclusion through sports.

Use athletes and organizations for public diplomacy, not advocacy. This study shows that most Israeli sports organizations do not see themselves as promoting Israel's foreign policy and are reluctant to get involved in it. In the early decades of the State of Israel, Israeli sport was affiliated with political parties, but that dependency has gradually declined since the 1980s (Kaufman & Galily, 2009). With that said, participants took

pride in their athletes and do think they represent the good sides of Israel. Sports organizations also should have the wiggle room to disassociate with governmental policies by claiming they focus only on sports. By letting politicians make political statements, sports organizations could maintain good professional relations. According to Pigman (2014), using athletes as goodwill ambassadors is a useful tactic, especially when countries are not able to host mega sports events. Participants from sports organizations gave a few examples of successful use of athletes as ambassadors. Yet, the representatives also mentioned that athletes need more help from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to prepare athletes to certain situations, and that different seminars will be beneficial for the athletes.

Focus more on participation-sports tourism. Because of the rich history of Jerusalem and Nazareth, the culture and freedom associated with Tel-Aviv (Alfasi, & Fenster, 2005) and unique places such as the Dead Sea, Israeli has the potential to brand itself as an attractive tourist destination (Nadeau et al., 2008). The historic locations, attractive scenery, and comfortable winter weather make Israel an attractive location to host marathons, triathlons, different cycling competitions, and open water competitions. Because of political reasons and because of logistics, the ability of Israel to host professional sports events is mostly limited to secondary level competitions in Europe. Israel also does not have football clubs that attract thousands of international tourists to every game. While participation-sports do not necessarily receive international coverage, they do embody branding opportunities and can improve sports tourism. With successful collaborations between sports organizations, governmental agencies, municipalities and

private companies, Israel could become known as an attractive location for popular participation sports bringing tourists to Israel to run, swim, and cycle. Israel should also explore the potential of targeting golf tourism, even at the cost of building new golf courses.

Aim beyond commemoration. Israel has been successfully using the commemoration of the Munich Victims in the Olympic Games for advocacy and public diplomacy purposes. According to Weiss (1997), Israel is obsessed with commemoration, as it serves a role in the connection between the Zionist Movement, Judaism, the land of Israel and creates a collective history. Yet, the obsessive focus on commemoration also corners Israel into being discussed in the context of the conflict, even at the Olympic Games. Israel is losing branding opportunities that other countries have, such as being portrayed as a “normal” country and a member of a global event that celebrates humanity. It also loses opportunities by not having a special “Israel House” during the Olympics that promotes the country’s culture, food, and music. Instead, Israel’s Olympic delegation organizes an evening that focuses on remembrance and terror. Having an Israeli House in the hosting city or organizing more events that celebrate Israeli culture could position Israel in the Olympic Movement in a more favorable way.

Develop the Maccabiah Games further. The Maccabiah Games are unique to Israel and embody unique collaborations between sports organizations and the government to promote Israel’s public diplomacy and nation branding. The Maccabiah Games played an important role in the development of the Zionist Movement and the State of Israel (Galily, 2009). Even in the twenty-first century, the Games generate

revenues and have positive various impacts on Israel. Yet, there is much more potential for the Maccabiah Games. More collaboration is needed with sports organizations to improve the athletics competitions and also to focus on sports that could encourage Jewish athletes who can make significant impact on Israeli sports to make Aliyah. Moreover, the organization of the Maccabiah Games needs to be better and become more technology savvy.

Encourage representation in international federations. Neoliberalists in international relations see importance in international bodies in terms of growth and keeping the stability of the system (Keohane & Martin, 1995). Numerous participants discussed positive implications of their involvement in international committees and federations. Sugden and Tomlinson (2017) researched FIFA and discussed how members of the of small countries were extremely influential in the international federation. Israeli sports administrators of course must stay away from corruption, but they do need to be part of the international game. It is in Israel's interest that there will be Israeli members in international federations. These representatives could advocate on behalf of their national federations and the country when political incidents happen. They could also garner more support for Israeli bids to host competitions and conferences. Sports organizations and the Israeli government should encourage their members, campaign for them to be elected to international organizations, and perhaps even compensate them.

Emphasize ethical policies. Israel's policy of competing against everyone and competing everywhere positions Israel as part of the global and western world. Israel should keep that policy and better communicate it. Moreover, Israel should better

communicate other ethical policies, such as fair play and not having a history of cheating at the Olympic Games. There are ethical concerns about the use of sports for public diplomacy, such as cheating, massive public spending, or leading political boycotts (Coakley, 2015a). As Israel is not an athletic powerhouse and as there are some sports for development and peace organizations in Israel, putting more emphasis on communicating positive values through sports could also be a branding opportunity. Emphasizing ethical policies and practices of Israeli sport could also shift Israel's diplomacy from the apologetic "Hasbara" (Aouragh, 2016; Gilboa, 2006), where Israel needs to explain why it is not an Apartheid country or apologize for racism in Israeli football, to a more positive discussion about ethical policies and practices that brand Israel as a country associated with Western universal values (Dart, 2016).

Improve and expand collaborations with foreign countries. Participants discussed existing collaborations sports organizations have with different countries, such as four-countries competitions in athletics, hosting German football youth teams to an annual tournament, having delegations from Japan and Central America visiting the Paralympic Committee. Israeli sports organizations and the Israeli government should strive to further expand these kinds of collaborations. Hosting sports events can normalize Israel (Dart, 2016) and collaborations can bring mutual growth (Keohane & Martin, 1995).

Consider the themes found in this study. While the first 11 recommendations focus on Israel, the last recommendations is directed to practitioners in other countries going through a prolonged conflict. There are many factors that shape a country's image

(Anholt, 2010; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015). Although this study focused on public diplomacy and nation branding, other areas came up such as collective identity, communication, and international relations. Going through a prolonged conflict has a negative impact on a country's image (Batra et al., 2000; Klein, Ettenson & Morris, 2008; Laroche et al., 2003). The themes in this study reflect an analysis that could be applied to other countries in similar situations. Understanding the different implications of the conflict is an important place to start with. Understanding how hosting sports events can impact the country's public diplomacy and branding is applicable to any country seeking to better use its soft power. It is important to understand how the athletes could be used as ambassadors by representing their country more broadly. Practitioners should be aware of the strengths of such representation in their respective countries. They also need to analyze who might be underrepresented and make necessary corrections. Understanding the relations between sports organizations and the government is important to knowing what kinds of collaborations are working and which are not. Understanding the challenges and opportunities that participants acknowledge, is important for decision-making which policies to implement. Thus, while this study focuses on Israel, the analysis could be done on other countries going through a prolonged conflict.

Future Research

Although this study fills some gaps in the literature, it is by no means a complete and comprehensive study about Israel's sports diplomacy and the branding of Israel through sports. Moreover, as nation branding and public diplomacy are multidisciplinary areas of research (Anholt, 2010; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Fan, 2010), much more

research could be done and implications could be further developed. In this section, I discuss the potential for research that was beyond the scope of this study.

This study focuses on analyzing Israeli sports organizations. A more comprehensive study about Israel's sports diplomacy and Israel's nation branding through sports could focus on (a) official Israel, (b) athletes and coaches representing Israel abroad, (c) the struggles of the families of the Munich Victims, and (d) different non-governmental organizations such as the Peres Center for Peace. This study does not focus on the outcome of the perceived image of Israel. Future studies should analyze how Israel's sports diplomacy and how the branding of Israel through sports impacts both participants and fans who experience Israel after coming to sports events and international audiences who are exposed to Israel through watching sports events. I strongly recommend future research on popular participation sports taking place in historic places in Israel.

One of the most important findings of this study focuses on the opportunity of combining sports and technology in a way that will benefit both the State of Israel and Israeli sports organization. While there are several examples of successful Israeli technological companies that focus on sports, participants in this study reflected that Israeli sports are not too technological. As there is an understanding in Israel that joining forces and focusing on sports technologies can bring positive benefits, future research on the role of sports technologies on the branding of Israel and Israel's public diplomacy is very much encouraged.

This study focuses on the role of sports organizations using sports for public diplomacy and nation branding in a country going through a prolonged conflict. Future studies should examine the roles of sports organizations in nation branding and public diplomacy, and the thin line they need to walk between representing a country and conforming to international federations. Moreover, future research should focus on comparative analysis of how different countries going through different ongoing conflicts are using sports for soft power purposes.

This study opens the door to future research on multiple other aspects related to the role of sports in Israel public diplomacy and nation branding. Gender has been very little discussed in this study and could be further elaborated in future studies. The role of Arab-Israeli football players in the Israeli national teams and international coverage of them not singing the national anthem is another angle. I discussed the role of commemoration in Israeli sports and how it relates to Israel's public diplomacy, but this could be furthered expanded as well. Future projects might include: (a) focusing on the roles of individual Israeli athletes and Israeli teams who compete abroad and their contribution to the branding of Israel, (b) focusing on the role of the families of the "Munich Victims" in Israel's public diplomacy, (c) focusing on future sports events that Israeli might host, (d) the role of sports for development and peace organizations in Israel's public diplomacy, and (e) the role of sports-related start-up companies in the branding of Israel.

Conclusions

Given the unstable political situation in the Middle East and constantly deteriorating image of Israel (Avraham, 2009; Gilboa, 2006), to improve the country's

image, Israel will need to find ways of doing so while the Israeli-Arabic conflict is still ongoing. Good public diplomacy needs to come from real policy by the government and successful branding needs to focus on real characteristics of the country (Cull, 2010; Nye, 2008). Most sports organizations in Israel do not see themselves as representing Israel's public diplomacy and especially not Israel's foreign policy. They do express the importance of representing the country and using sports for leaving a good image of Israel. They do see the need of showing that Israel is not just wars, but also sports and that sport has a normalizing role. Thus, for sports organizations to be able to use sports affectively for public diplomacy purposes, better collaborations and clear and direct communications with the state are needed.

The study contributes to existing literature on the role of sports in Israel (Galily, 2007), research on Israel's public diplomacy (Gilboa, 2006) and nation branding (Avraham, 2009). The study also enriches theoretical and empirical literature on public diplomacy (Cull, 2008; Gilboa, 2008; Nye, 2008), nation branding (Fan, 2010; Olins, 2002), different fields of study that construct country image (Anholt, 2010; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015) and on the roles of sports (Arning, 2013; Heslop, et al., 2010). The study of country image is a broad and interdisciplinary research area, therefore this study relates to work in disciplines of marketing, political science, sociology, communication, and of course sports management.

This study shows that when there is communication between sports organization in Israel and the governmental agencies, there were also examples of collaboration where sports was used for public diplomacy. The most significant examples were (a) the use of

the Maccabiah Games that plays official roles in Israel's public diplomacy, (b) the use of Paralympic athletes as ambassadors and spokespeople for the Israeli Foreign Ministry and other Israeli and Jewish agencies, and (c) involvement of the state in the commemoration of the Eleven Munich Victims. Whenever shared goals between the State of Israel and Israeli sports organizations were communicated, different collaborations were established that helped Israel confront adversity (e.g., demands of exclusions from international organizations or refusals of entry visas to certain countries).

However, the lack of a formal strategy of sports diplomacy and the modest athletic achievements by Israeli teams and athletes made sports diplomacy a low priority for Israeli governmental agencies and prevented Israeli sports organizations to maximize the potential in the branding of Israel. Examples for the impact of lack of collaboration and communication included organizations not even knowing the official Israeli foreign policies or public diplomacy strategies. Further, organizations did not systematically send athletes through seminars or orientations for the potential role of being ambassadors for Israel. The branding of Israel focuses on Israel's creative energy. However partly because of the lack of communication by the Israeli government and lack of collaborations, sports organizations feel they are not involved in the state's strategy.

The representatives of sports organizations and governmental agencies understood the potential of being a technological powerhouse in sports technology. Over the last two years, there has been a growing understanding that sports technology is a path for Israel to be able to brand itself through sport. There are various companies and startups that have been developing sports technologies, however, sports organizations in Israel admit

they are not technological pioneers in their sport. Israel has managed to use technology as a way to create a bypassing message to the Israeli-Arabic dispute and position itself as a highly developed country while the armed conflict has not been resolved. Branding Israel as a SportTech Nation requires successful collaborations between the State of Israel and Israeli sports organizations and a clear communicated strategy. If Israeli sports technologies lead to improvement of athletic achievements, Israel could leverage that for branding and diplomatic opportunities. Other opportunities for joint interests between sports organizations and the State of Israel, include emphasizing the diversity and inclusion in Israeli sports by having athletes as ambassadors or shifting athletic priorities and focusing on popular sports such as marathon races that target mass participation rather than spectatorship. Yet, for public diplomacy and nation branding to be successful, the State of Israel and Israeli sports organizations must improve their collaboration and create an ongoing two-way communication.

Good public diplomacy and good nation branding must be tied to real policies and characteristics. By focusing on becoming a high-tech nation, hosting sport events, or focusing on activities that bridge communities, Israel would also need to improve its technologies, reach better athletic achievements, become more inclusive and diverse, and fight racism. By implementing a strategy that benefits both sports organizations and the State of Israel, Israel could have a better chance of using sports for having a better image, better position the country globally, improve international collaborations, and reach diplomatic goals.

Much like the Israeli-Arabic dispute, the use of sports for soft power purposes is controversial, and has a lot of grey areas. On one hand, when governments use sports for propaganda purposes, there could be negative implications. Hundreds of athletes who trained rigorously anticipating their moments of glory in the international competitions, including the Olympic Games, have been stripped from the opportunity to compete because of political reasons (Guttmann, 2002). Corruption, doping, boycotts, exclusions, mass public spending, and destruction of nature are all negative outcomes of governments attempting to try and better their image through sports (Boykoff, 2016; Coakley, 2015a). Adolf Hitler used the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games to show the German people how strong and organized Germany could be under the leadership of the Nazi Party. The most evil regime and the worst genocide humankind ever saw shaped the collective identity of Israelis and Jews, including myself. The use of sports for country image purposes can lead to terrible outcomes in some cases.

On the other hand, countries try to maximize their potential in the international system. Soft power, cultural diplomacy, sports diplomacy, and nation branding through sports, give countries other options to shape the country's images and try to reposition themselves in the international system through peaceful means. One might ask whether the world is really going to be a better place if instead of public spending on grand sports events, cheating in athletic competitions, or boycotting a judo match, countries will spend these efforts and money on more tanks, more sophisticated bombs and even deadlier war machines. While this might sound like a rhetoric question, this study shows that in a context of an ongoing dispute that involves terrorism, constant security implications, and

extreme escalations of an armed conflict, even George Orwell's famous statement about sports being "war minus shooting" (Orwell, 1945) is conceptually and literally challenged.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Informed Consent Statement

Israel's use of sports for place branding and public diplomacy

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ADVISOR:

Lars Dzikus, PhD

INTRODUCTION

You are being given the opportunity to participate in this research study. The purpose of this consent form is to help you decide if you want to take part in the research study. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the investigator to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

The purpose of this study is to analyze how Israel has used sports for nation branding and public diplomacy. My name is Yoav Dubinsky. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies with a specialization in Sport Management at the University of Tennessee (UT), Knoxville.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

If you decide to participate in the study, we will schedule an interview for a date and time that is convenient for you. The interview will take between 30 and 60 minutes. The interview will take place in person, on the phone, or via video conference (e.g., Skype) as long as the location is safe, conducive for interviewing, and provides reasonable privacy. The interview will be audio recorded and the recording will later be transcribed verbatim. If you wish to stop the interview at any point, you may do so without negative consequences by notifying the interviewer. You are welcome to ask questions at any point during your participation in the study. At a later point, you will receive an email invitation to provide brief, written feedback on the accuracy of the interview transcript and your views on the researchers' interpretation of the data. You will not be required to provide this feedback.

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICIPATION

The possible risks to participants are minimal. You can choose to not respond to any question you are not comfortable answering.

There is the potential risk of loss of confidentiality. Although unlikely, it may be possible for a reasonably determined person to identify participants due to the small number of participants in the study. Every effort will be made to keep information confidential; however, this cannot be guaranteed. Beyond this, there are no foreseeable risks other than those encountered in everyday life.

Participant's Initials _____

BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICIPATION

There are no anticipated direct benefits to you resulting from your participation in the research. This research may inform the understanding of Israel's use of sports for place branding and public diplomacy, which in turn might inform policy makers.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise, the information in the study records will be kept confidential. That means your actual name will not be linked to written transcripts. You will be asked to come up with a "fake name" (a pseudonym) that will be used in place of your name. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. Recordings will be stored on the researcher's password protected computer. The recordings will be deleted after the interviews have been transcribed. Signed consent forms will be kept separate from other records in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Dzikus's office.

QUESTIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Yoav Dubinsky while he is in Israel at +972-544415540. You may contact Yoav upon his return to the United States at 1914 Andy Holt Avenue, 322 HPER Building, Knoxville, TN 37996 and 865-974-3295. You may also contact Yoav Dubinsky's advisor Dr. Dzikus (lars@utk.edu or 865-974-0451). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (printed) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Israel's use of sports for public diplomacy and nation branding

Research Question:

How does Israel use sports for public diplomacy and nation branding purposes?

Group 1: Policy Makers

Interview Guide Questions that are supposed to help answer the research question:

1. Is your organization using sport to improve Israel's political image? How?
2. Is your organization using sport to achieve Israeli foreign policy goals? How?
3. Is your organization using sport to improve the Israel's economy? How?
4. Is your organization using sport to showcase Israeli technology? How?
5. Is your organization using sport to improve Israel's tourism? How?
6. Is your organization using sport to expose Israeli products? How?
7. Is your organization using sport to showcase the character of Israeli people?
How?
8. Is your organization using sport to showcase the Israel's moral values? How?
9. Is your organization using sport to showcase Israeli culture? How?
10. Is your organization using sport to showcase Israel's historical heritage? How?
11. Is your organization using sports for advocacy purposes in the Israeli-Arabic dispute? How?
12. Describe the relations and dependencies between your organization and Israeli sports institutions.
13. Describe the challenges your organization is facing in the context of Israel's public diplomacy and nation branding?

14. Can Israel use sport as a bypassing message for the Israeli-Arabic dispute? How?
15. Describe the importance of the following for Israel's public diplomacy and for the branding of Israel:
- (a) The Maccabiah Games
 - (b) The 1972 Munich Massacre
 - (c) Boycotts and exclusions
 - (d) Hosting sport events
 - (e) Participating in sport events
16. What would you change to improve Israel's use of sports for public diplomacy and nation branding?
- To sum up, is there anything else you would like to add about the role of your organization in Israel's use of sports for public diplomacy and nation branding?

Thank you very much for your time.

Research Question:

How does Israel use sports for public diplomacy and nation branding purposes?

Group 2: Sports Organizations**Interview Guide Questions that are supposed to help answer the research question:**

1. Is your organization using sport to improve Israel's political image? How?
2. Is your organization using sport to achieve Israeli foreign policy goals? How?
3. Is your organization using sport to improve the Israel's economy? How?
4. Is your organization using sport to showcase Israeli technology? How?
5. Is your organization using sport to improve Israel's tourism? How?
6. Is your organization using sport to expose Israeli products? How?
7. Is your organization using sport to showcase the character of Israeli people?
How?
8. Is your organization using sport to showcase the Israel's moral values? How?
9. Is your organization using sport to showcase Israeli culture? How?
10. Is your organization using sport to showcase Israel's historical heritage? How?
11. Is your organization using sports for advocacy purposes in the Israeli-Arabic dispute? How?
12. Describe the relations and dependencies between your organization and Israeli governmental organizations and public policy making institutions.
13. Describe the challenges your organization is facing in the context of Israel's public diplomacy and nation branding?
14. Can Israel use sport as a bypassing message for the Israeli-Arabic dispute? How?

15. Describe the importance of the following for Israel's public diplomacy and for the branding of Israel:

- (a) The Maccabiah Games
- (b) The 1972 Munich Massacre
- (c) Boycotts and exclusions
- (d) Hosting sport events
- (e) Participating in sport events

16. What would you change to improve Israel's use of sports for public diplomacy and nation branding?

To sum up, is there anything else you would like to add about the role of your organization in Israel's use of sports for public diplomacy and nation branding?

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix C: IRB Approval



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

October 31, 2017

Yoav Dubinsky,
UTK - Coll of Education, Hlth, & Human - Kinesiology Recreation & Sport Studies

Re: UTK IRB-17-04024-XP
Study Title: Israel' s use of sports for nation branding and public diplomacy

Dear Yoav Dubinsky:

The UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for the above referenced project. It determined that your application is eligible for expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1), categories (6) and (7). The IRB has reviewed these materials and determined that they do comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects.

Therefore, this letter constitutes full approval by the IRB of your application (version 1.0) as submitted, including IRB Dissertation Consent Form Yoav Dubinsky (v1.0), Interview Guides (v1.1), and the Participant Recruitment Email Yoav Dubinsky (v1.0). The listed forms have been dated and stamped IRB approved. Approval of this study will be valid from October 31, 2017 to October 30, 2018.

In the event that subjects are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, web-based advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB. Any revisions in the approved application must also be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Finally, re-approval of your project is required by the IRB in accord with the conditions specified above. You may not continue the research study beyond the time or other limits specified unless you obtain prior written approval of the IRB.

Sincerely,

Colleen P. Gilman, Ph.D.
Chair

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement
1534 White Avenue Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
865-974-2697 865-974-7400 fax: 865-974-7400

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VITA

Yoav Dubinsky is an Israeli scholar and a journalist, who wrote his PhD dissertation at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Department of Kinesiology and Sport Studies. with a concentration in Sport Studies and a specialization in Sport Management. Yoav Dubinsky's academic background was in social science and in sports management. His professional experience covering sports events all over the world, and his international background, lead him to focus on sports, nation branding and public diplomacy; namely how countries and different communities use sport as a way to culturally and socially engage foreign stakeholders and improve their international image. His PhD dissertation studies how Israeli sports organizations in Israel use sports for nation branding and public diplomacy.

Yoav's education is both international and multidisciplinary. Yoav received a BA in Political Science and MA in Political Communications from Tel-Aviv University (Israel). In 2009, Yoav joined the International Olympic Academy in Greece where Yoav was one of the first international students to finish the MA Program in Olympic Studies, Olympic Education and Organization of Olympic Events (in conjunction with the University of Peloponnese). Yoav has also studied at the University of Ottawa, in Canada, where Yoav published an article in *The International Journal of Sport and Society* as lead-author in 2012 about the communication strategies of the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games.

Since joining the PhD program at the University of Tennessee in 2015, Yoav has developed a clearly defined research line that focuses on sports, nation branding and public diplomacy, focusing especially on Israel and politics in international sports.

Communications, media, journalism and public relations, influenced Yoav's research in every part of his career. As of graduation, this line of research at the University of Tennessee has produced one published article as a sole author (*The World History Bulletin*) and one manuscript as a co-author (*International Journal of History of Sport*). Yoav has received several grants and scholarships, including the Chancellor's Fellowship, the McClure Grant that covered part of Yoav's research in Brazil during the 2016 Olympics, as well as funding to conduct research on the 2017 Maccabiah Games in Israel. Yoav has presented in over a dozen international, national and local conferences in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Spain, Brazil and Israel.

Yoav has valuable experience in terms of teaching and service. As a Graduate Teaching Associate, Yoav taught three different courses as Instructor of Record in the Recreation and Sport Management curriculum (Sport Communication, Social Issues in Sport, and Socio-Cultural Foundations of Sport and Recreation). Previously, Yoav also taught online at the Open University of Catalonia, Spain (Sport, Media and Conflict Resolution).

As for service, Yoav was involved with the International Olympic Academy in Greece between 2009 and 2013, coordinating four sessions with 200 participants from 100 different countries. Yoav has also been a reviewer for *the International Journal of Sport and Society* in 2012, 2017 and 2018. At the University of Tennessee, Yoav served frequently as a guest lecturer in various undergraduate and graduate sports management classes, as well as a member of a departmental ad-hoc diversity committee.

Regarding work in the sports industry, Yoav has over a decade of experience in journalism. Yoav has covered hundreds of national and international sports events in various countries, including the last three summer Olympic Games in Beijing, London, and Rio de Janeiro. Yoav has written and edited over 1,000 articles that were published in Israeli media outlets. As an editor, Yoav has managerial experience of managing a department with over 20 workers. All of this experience allows Yoav to bring “real life” perspectives to his teaching and research in sport management and sport communication.