Greatest Sporting Cities 2015
Research Report

A report prepared for ESPN

by

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the findings of a study commissioned by ESPN to establish the UK's Greatest Sporting Cities 2015. Specifically, the study sought to: (i) identify, via consultation with sports fans, the most important factors that make up a great sporting city, and (ii) provide a ranking of UK cities in line with the results of these consultations.

The study had two primary objectives:

1. To engage in an in-depth consultation period with sports fans to enable the identification and weighting of key factors that make up a great sporting city;
2. To weight the key factors identified, calculate the overall scores for the cities, and rank them accordingly.

A mixed methodological approach was employed to facilitate these objectives comprising both qualitative and quantitative elements. The qualitative aspect of the research consisted of a number of focus groups with sports fans. The quantitative element involved a survey and weighted-ranking data analysis.

Key Findings

Key Finding 1: Manchester places 1st (pipping London to top spot)
Manchester emerged as the Greatest Sporting City 2015. This achievement owed much to its consistent performance, where it placed in the top quarter of cities for 7 of the 12 key factors identified by sports fans. This is commensurate with the sporting reputation of Manchester, which hosts two of the top English football teams (Manchester City and Manchester United) and a number of rugby clubs.

Key Finding 2: Glasgow top Scottish city
Glasgow emerged as the top Scottish sporting city ranking 3rd overall largely due to its rich sporting history (especially in relation to football). Edinburgh ranked 9th – mainly due to its high fan satisfaction and international rugby venue (Murrayfield). Dundee and Aberdeen ranked 26th and 39th respectively.

Key Finding 3: Cardiff top Welsh city

Cardiff was the top Welsh city, ranking 10th overall with rival Swansea ranking in 36th place. Cardiff's top ten finish owed much to the quality of its sporting venues (e.g., the Millennium Stadium). Swansea had high fan satisfaction, but ranked bottom on 'value for money' largely because of the price of an adult ticket at Swansea City FC.

Key Finding 4: Sunderland places 4th

Following Manchester, London and Glasgow, Sunderland emerged as the fourth best sporting city in the UK. A key factor here was Sunderland FC's Women's football team with their excellent 2014 season (losing only once). Local rivals Newcastle and Middlesbrough ranked 16th and 34th respectively.

Key Finding 5: Derby fares well in 8th place

Derby performed well, placing eighth overall. Value for money was a determining factor here with Derby County FC offering exceptional value; a £10 adult match day ticket - which is well below the Championship average. Derby proved to be the best city in the Midlands, outranking rivals Birmingham (17th), Coventry (43rd), Nottingham (20th), Leicester (18th), Peterborough (37th), and Northampton (33rd).

Key Finding 6: Birmingham ranks 17th

England's second city, Birmingham, emerged in 17th place. Fan satisfaction with the city was modest but performance was strong on 'value for money' and it ranked well for sporting history (6th overall).

Key Finding 7: Blackpool finishes bottom

Blackpool placed bottom in the study. This was largely due to high levels of fan dissatisfaction displayed by the survey factors (bottom in all but one). This might be attributed to the unrest surrounding Blackpool FC, who endured a torrid 2014-15 season both on and off the pitch.

1.   INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the findings of a study commissioned by ESPN to establish the UK's Greatest Sporting Cities 2015. Specifically, the study sought to identify, via consultation with sports fans, the most important factors that make up a great sporting city, weight each factor based on the results of these consultations, and ultimately provide a ranking of the cities involved. It is anticipated that the results of the study will generate discussion and debate amongst sports fans and other interested parties.

The study had two primary objectives:

1. To engage in an in-depth consultation period with sports fans to enable the identification and weighting of key factors that make up a great sporting city;

2. To weight the key factors identified, calculate the overall scores for the cities, and rank them accordingly.

2.   METHODOLOGY

A mixed methodological approach was employed to meet these objectives. To this end, the underpinning research included both qualitative and quantitative elements. The qualitative aspect of the research comprised a number of focus groups with sports fans. The quantitative element of the research involved a survey and weighted-ranking data analysis.

Objective 1: To engage in an in-depth consultation period with sports fans to enable the identification and weighting of key factors that make a great sporting city

In February 2015, the research team embarked upon a period of consultation with sports fans to determine the factors that make up a great sporting city. Here, 8 focus groups from a cross-section of the UK's cities were conducted with the resultant data being transcribed and analysed for emerging themes. We acknowledged that there could be differences in what was important to sports fans in different parts of the UK. Therefore, we chose regionally-based

focus group locations that facilitated a comprehensive cross-section of fan opinion.[1] Following this, in April 2015, the research team designed and distributed an online survey soliciting the input of sports fans on what, in their opinion, were the most important factors of a great sporting city. This survey was informed by the focus group data and contained a list of key factors that fans identified as important for (and integral to) the profile of a great sporting city. In the survey, fans ranked these factors in order of importance.

Objective 2: To weight the key factors, calculate the overall scores for the cities, and rank them accordingly

In June 2015, the research team analysed the data from the survey to assign factor weightings by importance. To do this, they calculated the percentage of fans who reported each factor as most important. These percentages were then used to assign weighting. Once the weightings were assigned, the process of weighted-ranking began. This comprised four stages:

(1) The raw data about the factors for each city was collected and placed in a database (e.g., fan satisfaction with sporting atmosphere, club success, history, etc.).

(2) Since the data differed qualitatively from factor to factor, the research team transformed the raw data onto a standardized 100 point scale. Once the data had been transformed, each raw data point conformed to a uniform scale and was therefore interpretable.

(3) The transformed score was subsequently weighted by multiplying it by a coefficient that corresponded to the weighting assigned from the aforementioned survey analysis.

(4) The transformed and weighted scores for all factors were then added together to form an overall total for the city in question. These totals were then used to rank the cities.

Having briefly outlined the overall design of the research underpinning the study, it is to the qualitative (focus group) data analysis that we initially turn.

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[1] The 8 UK regions comprised: (1) North West (England); (2) North East (England); (3) Midlands (England); (4) South East (England); (5) South West (England); (6) Scotland; (7) Wales, and (8) Northern Ireland.

3.   QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Focus groups were conducted at 8 geographical locations representing major UK regions: London, Bristol, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Leeds, Birmingham, Manchester, and Belfast (see Appendix A). Focus groups comprised between 8-10 participants and lasted between 45-60 minutes. All discussions were audio and video recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Focus group discussion was guided by a pre-determined interview schedule (see Appendix B) and a number of discursive themes ('factors') subsequently emerged from the groups which encapsulated the cumulative contents and the collective experiences, views and opinions of participants (see Table 1, Appendix C).[2] As can be seen from Table 1, not all groups discussed each of the themes/factors listed. In turn, and depending upon the geographical location in question, emphasis lay on particular factors which participants deemed most relevant in terms of defining what makes a 'great sporting city'. The following transcript extracts demonstrate the in-depth views of participants in line with the 12 factors identified.[3]

1.   Value for Money: The relative affordability of sports consumption

When discussing value for money, participants from all eight locations highlighted the way in which the cost of watching professional sport had become an increasingly prohibitive issue over the last 5-10 years. Men's football was cited as the main culprit for this with some of the top English Premier League teams being singled out as particularly problematic. That said, where clubs incentivised spectators (especially around family attendance) this was seen as especially good value, as highlighted by Mark and Gary from Manchester:

Mark: What [Manchester] City did … last season they did a couple of games where it was like £15 a ticket which is great and the kids I think were a fiver … and that was really reasonable … you know more people can afford to do that …

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[2] In total, 23 themes (factors) were initially identified from the focus group discussions. On initial analysis, the first 11 themes/factors listed in Table 1 (Appendix C) were considered to be the most prevalent and the second of these, 'Grassroots', was subsequently divided into two ('Participation' and 'Local Talent') to more accurately articulate the views of respondents. The resulting 12 factors were those around which quantitative data collection was structured.

[3] Where respondent views are provided, pseudonyms have been used throughout. On occasion, transcript extract features discussion of more than one theme/factor. In such instances, the final categorisation of discussion has been carried out in line with the predominant theme/factor in play.

Gary   [At] Oldham about four weeks ago … it was £5 a ticket to get in and it was packed … it was rammed. They ran out of pies before kick-off which is unheard of [*Laughter*] and the atmosphere was brilliant … So, I think the plan was to get everybody in, bring your kids, experience it, score a hat full of goals and then you'll be there the week after and out of 10 kids you might get one of them who becomes a regular supporter …

Other cities incentivised across a range of sports. The stand-out example in this respect was Belfast where Harry, Chris, and Sue provided their reflections on value for money in rugby, ice hockey, and football respectively:

Harry: It's a really good price as well for the tickets for Ulster games compared to maybe a Northern Ireland football match. For an Ulster match you could pay £22.50 for a standing ticket.

Chris: The one I think is quite good … would be the ice hockey at the Odyssey. As a student it's £10 a ticket. It's good. The matches start, I think it's 7:05 pm roughly, you're there to 9:30-9:45 pm and it's good … The kids enjoy it. There's so many families you see going. They do family season tickets, everything .. [F]acilities, it's male toilets, female toilets the whole way round the arena. It's as good as I've been to for a night of sport here as well so its reasonably cheap and you can get a season ticket for, I think it's £10 a game. There's about 30 home games. I think I went to about 20 last year. It's brilliant. It is getting better as well. More bigger names coming over, NHL players playing now …

Sue: We've had some great nights at Windsor Park … So, I think probably when you compare it to other things, our prices are reasonable. What was the Cup Final on Saturday? Was it £15? Yeah, now in saying that, maybe £15 isn't reasonable because of the facilities you're getting when you get there but in terms of it being your show piece, your football show piece, I think £15 is probably okay.

2. Participation: The opportunity for recreational and grassroots participation

Participation in sport was recognised and highly valued in some locations. For example, in Birmingham, provision for participation was identified as being evident across a range of sport and recreation contexts, as Rob explained:

Rob: There's a lot for grass roots … especially with the rugby and the football, there seems to be a lot for the children. A lot of the clubs have got community groups as well … which I think is really, really good and I think it's really important to get youngsters … involved … I mean you only have to look in the Birmingham Evening Mail and look at all the sort of semi-professional, amateur … rugby clubs and football clubs; there's loads. I think that's fantastic 'cos it promotes good health, enjoyment, sport, community, family, you know, all those things … We've got a fantastic network of facilities around Birmingham and it is all accessible … I think Birmingham's got it all if I'm honest.

In Manchester too, development programmes and investment at the grassroots level appeared to be visible:

Jake: Manchester does spend money on sporting things like … the museums and it gives you the opportunity to go in for free and also donations and stuff. It just shows that they're making an effort and sport is kind of quite good and popular in the community and it means a lot. And obviously if you look around there's … lots of work on a grassroots level as well, you know, get kids involved in sports. So, I think … on the whole it's positive.

For Paul in Cardiff, consideration of sports participation was central to any discussion surrounding the sporting profile of a city:

            … I think you should look at how many people in a city participate in sports, whatever sport that is, plus … what facilities are there for them, how many football pitches are there for kids to play football on and local teams. How many swimming pools are there for kids to learn swimming and things like that?

3. Local Talent: The emergence and opportunity for 'home grown' talent

In terms of the emergence of 'home grown' talent, perhaps not surprisingly, a number of participants in the Manchester focus group were quick to point out both the opportunities and the benefits surrounding this issue with reference to the way in which such processes had (in their view) underpinned much of Manchester United's success in more recent years. Discussion centred on the 'Class of 92' and the rise of football stars such as David Beckham. There were similar references to the 'home grown' ethos at Liverpool Football Club:

John: As in celebrating the old home grown talent that have retried or passed and celebrating like you walk around any football club like Old Trafford … I think it's important to recognise things like that.

Mark: I think it's great to see a local lad play for a local team like Steven Gerrard, for example, he's 100% Liverpool through and through and I think that we need more of that.

Paul: I think you're right because … the best United team for me was when we had Beckham, Scholes, Giggs and all them players because they were like brought up … through the youth team … I think it's better for the team [and] the fans, if they're through and through.

For participants in Belfast, the emergence and development of 'home grown' talent was evident across the sporting landscape and, as the following discussion illustrates, this was seen as a very positive feature of the overall profile of sport within the city:

Chris: A good few from Northern Ireland play [ice hockey] … maybe two or three out of 15 players … there will be a couple of English and then Canadian fellas [and] Americans …

Harry: That's a lot like rugby 'cause there's people from the local area instead of it just being a Premier League soccer team where it's just like you can have nobody from there, it makes you a bit more attached to your club which I think is what makes fans more passionate. That's all that makes the experience for me 'cause

you always know someone you went to school with, you know the full back ….
Yeah, I think you feel a bit more of an attachment to your team so that's why I
like Ulster Rugby a lot.

Dave: It sort of gives local kids hope as well, the fact they can see people ... playing
against … the likes of these big superstars in world rugby …   That's pretty
inspiring I think.

Sue: I think accessibility to your players makes for a better environment for your
sport. If you've got clubs where you know the players … and you see them, they
know you, where players start to recognise fans, I think that makes a big
difference ... We're smaller here in terms of the number of people that come to
things so it's easier to do it but definitely for us I think Northern Ireland likes
ownership. We want ownership of our stars. We … want to be able to say they
came from here.

Chris: Players come out after the game, if you want to you can go round and have a
drink, meet them, talk to them about the match or whatever … They do different
things by meeting the players. There's lots of opportunities to meet them. So
… it's encouraging kids going, "I went to the Giants night ... I saw such and
such last week and I want to go back there next week". I think that's good ...

4. **Atmosphere: The perceived sporting environment and culture of a given city**
Where sporting atmosphere was concerned, the size of cities made a difference. In London, for
example, participants noted that because of the geography of the city itself and the sheer
number of sporting events that might be taking place at any one time, it was not always easy to
get a sense of the depth or coherence of the overall sporting culture unless an event was of a
certain magnitude:

Joe: You wouldn't necessarily know something's going on … like the FA Cup Final
… unless you follow it it's not apparent … yet something like the Olympics,
'bang', the whole city, everybody united about one thing and it really came
alive …

For participants in Edinburgh, sporting atmosphere was inextricably linked to the more general physical and cultural environment on offer:

Steve: Not only that but Edinburgh is a sporting city in that it's a beautiful city ... For sports fans, to be coming here to watch their sports event, it's a lovely advert for Scotland … you look at Edinburgh, it's gorgeous and it's a lovely place to bring people.

Becky: And it's a small capital city. You can walk round Edinburgh. And I think people get very personal with it. The very first time I came to Edinburgh was to watch the Scotland, England game and I loved it. I was twenty one and I just fell in love it. Just the whole vibe. It was just fantastic.

Ruth: Edinburgh always has tourists and pretty much always has since I can remember, it's just been a place where people like to come because it is quite unique, so I think that adds a lot to sport and what Edinburgh can bring as an experience to the sporting side and culturally ...

Participants in Cardiff also noted the importance of size and physical layout in relation to the creation of a conducive sporting atmosphere. For them, the location of key sporting venues within the city centre facilitated a high quality sporting experience:

Rhodri: Families come here … and like I'm saying the guy might go to sport but then his wife might go to the castle or museum and you've got all the other city centre facilities … within walking distance of the stadium hotels. I mean we could draw a pin around every stadium here and you'd be able to walk there in 20 minutes.

Gerard: I'd say what makes this place really good is the friendly and welcoming people … The facilities are … not just for the people who are going to the game but their like wives and children who could still come down with them have their own day out and then they can meet up afterwards and maybe have a few drinks together or a meal or go straight home. So it's everything else around here that comes with it not just the sporting event itself …

5. Community: The quality of the link between sports clubs and their communities

As we have seen, part of the reason why fans generate particular affinities with certain sports or sports clubs is because they develop a sense of ownership and belonging. Similarly, participants related notions of 'community' to the way in which clubs (re)invested in the people whose support upon which their existence depended. Becky talked of her experiences of community links in Edinburgh:

Becky: I think the community element is a big thing, certainly at rugby. Certainly at Heriots at that sort of level. Because you get little kids, you get tiny little tots on the pitch after the game with their Grandad and their Grandad has maybe been a life-long Heriots supporter - maybe a player originally and his son's played and now his grandchildren have come along. You get all of that. And … you get old boys who … run the League on the weekend ... So there's lots of that community element … and that's a wonderful part of sport for me.

Participants in Cardiff articulated similar sentiments about their experiences of community in relation to football and cricket:

Barry: What Cardiff City's done in recent times - and I know what Glamorgan Cricket have done as well - is they've given tickets out to the community to promote their sport …

For a number of participants in Leeds, a sense of community around sport was very much about connections to Leeds United Football Club:

Ben: Oh yeah, we're a one club city in football - and obviously in rugby and cricket, although essentially that's Yorkshire - … it's very much a community club feel and I love that … I don't know if you get that in Manchester or bigger cities where there are 3 or 4 football clubs or lots more rugby clubs. And I think that's great for the city.

6. Transport/Accessibility: The ease of access to and from sporting venues

Somewhat inevitably, participants in London saw transport and accessibility to and from sporting venues as a major selling point providing that public transport (especially the London Underground) was the main facilitator of this and that the use of cars was avoided. Edinburgh too scored highly in the minds of its focus group attendees around transport and accessibility. It is worth noting at this point that both of these cities have hosted mega sports events in recent years and therefore have benefitted greatly from wider infrastructural investment. As we have seen, in terms of the creation of a positive sporting atmosphere, environment and culture, proximity and size were regarded as a significant advantage for Cardiff and this was clearly connected to transport and overall accessibility:

Alan: Everyone who's come to Cardiff has said how brilliant it is, everything is in one place.

Barry: No congestion.

Matt: They were saying, "Oh my God, it's amazing you go straight off the train into the stadium and then the town's right next to you." … In other venues you've got transport, you tend to break off into small groups, it keeps that atmosphere alive in the town after a game, or after whatever games and people mix because you go into a bar and you'll see people with different jerseys on having a laugh after the game and talking about it. And for me that's I think the culture of it...

Rachel: Yes, because it's got football and rugby, it goes hand in hand with having a drink ... So, for instance when you go to the Millennium Stadium you can go, you can have a few drinks there what have you, you can watch the match and then because the pubs are so close to it everyone can spill out afterwards and you can start chatting about the match. It seems that whereas if you're nowhere near any pubs or anything else everyone's going to get in their respective cars or trains or what have you and just go home and that sort of cuts the atmosphere.

Alan: Accessibility, I think, again, the transport links … are really, really good and then the facilities … it's the clubs and the bars and everything around the ground all being within walking distance without having to get on a tube, a train,

15

get back in the car to go to places after the game, before the game, things like that …

7. Club(s) Success: The recent sporting success of the professional clubs

The recent success of sports teams was frequently associated with the positive sporting profile of the city in which they were situated. For example, a number of participants in Edinburgh noted the impact of Sir Chris Hoy on Scottish sport more widely and those who have since followed in his footsteps in terms of great sporting achievements:

Drew: I think Scotland punches well above its weight in terms of sporting success and a large part of that is down to the facilities and the infrastructure in Edinburgh to be able to drive that. Like Michael Jamieson. We were in a swimming pool the other day and they had his swimming cap and gold medal on the wall of the changing room and that's something that inspires kids, but if you haven't got the things in place to make that happen, then it doesn't inspire kids because they don't have gold medals to look at and [think] I'm sure I can get one of those in a couple of years.

Meanwhile, focus group discussion in Belfast highlighted the way in which relatively recent success had impacted both the lives of participants and the city itself:

Phil: I think being an Ulster Rugby fan it's been a real evolution over the past few years, going from the old ground and rugby being rather young in its professional era. Nowadays with the new stadium … the whole game has just become so much more professional. Now I think that it's much more appealing to people who maybe wouldn't follow rugby because there's that corporate brand about it that you can roll out your back door and watch world class, top level sport two miles down the road.

Harry: You've got their legacy and then you've got their success over the past few years. Ulster are constantly … the amount of times I have come back just sat on a train from Dublin after a play-off or just European Champions cup, it's just like you'll support a team even if they play poorly, if they've played well in the

16

past or even if they're perennial underdogs. So … even if the team doesn't really have much history but has played well for a few seasons, that's going to bring it in.

8. Social: The quality of social opportunities and experiences for fans at sporting events

The social aspects of sporting events were articulated by the vast majority of focus group participants across all eight cities. A number talked of how certain sporting events had become traditional past-times within the context of their families. Others, such as Mark from Manchester and Colin from Edinburgh, described their own experiences of the social side of sport:

Mark: I think with every sport though it is social because ... well I never go on my own to watch any sporting event, so it's always what to do before, whether you go and have a couple of drinks before you go and watch a game, whether it be the rugby or the football and then what you're going to afterwards. I mean, I love going to the pub just by City's ground … I get there a couple of hours before and just have a few drinks and stuff and talk to people that I wouldn't necessarily talk to on the street but because we're all there supporting the one team, if I start talking to all sorts of people that you would never come into contact with and I love that.

Colin: I was in Glasgow … last weekend with the family for the Scottish Cup semi-final and it was a whole day out. The whole family. We went to the pub before, watched the match, had a meal after and actually the match was just a wee small part of it and that's what - it's more the social aspect rather than just religiously following your football team and going to the match.

For participants in Belfast, the relatively recent rise of sport in the city had brought with it a series of new social opportunities:

Phil: I would say I think Ulster Rugby before the new stadium was much more like a rugby club, like a real amateur rugby club in that it was the same faces going every week to watch the matches. Whereas now it's almost a social event ...

17

Chris: Yeah. I have really no interest in rugby, I watch a bit of it but that's why I go, if my mates say "What are you doing tonight?", [I] maybe go into the town for a few drinks, go and watch the rugby. It just gets you out of the house. It's Friday night, you're not going to do much anyway. It's a bit of craic watching the rugby as well and obviously a good standard so you can enjoy it. You mightn't really be fussed and all so you get into the game a bit, obviously local club you want them to end up winning so it makes for a decent night.

9.   Venues: The quality of sporting venues

There appeared to be a common acceptance across all of the focus groups that great sporting cities could only be considered as such on the basis that they boasted great sporting venues. As a consequence of the level of investment around the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, participants in London were well aware that the capital held significant advantage in this respect, this in addition to the number of other high quality sporting venues within its geography (i.e. the Emirates Stadium). Participants in other cities similarly recognised the benefits of such investment, as Craig from Bristol explained:

Craig: Facilities is a big one … the stadium …I think modern, purpose-built arenas to play in … it's a high requirement of any club moving forward … You get more support than some of the other teams because of better facilities, more fans go through. You see it time and time again around the country … Cardiff, Leicester, Reading and all of a sudden they get brand new sparkling purpose-built stadiums and they go up a level straight away …

Participants in Edinburgh and Belfast had witnessed this kind of investment over the last 20-30 years and had come to recognise the subsequent impact:

Becky: I'm not into cycling at all but I've been in the Grassmarket and there's been some sort of massive cycling race on in the summer last year. I didn't know the first thing about it, but there was a huge number of people there. So I think it [Edinburgh] is a venue … [that] can accommodate a lot of sports. Like I said, we've got the Commonwealth pool, you've got Meadowbank, you've got Murrayfield, you've got the football stadiums you've got the cricket.

Drew: Outside looking in, because I'm a foreigner, the facilities per the population here [Edinburgh] are pretty impressive. And I think that probably stems from the fact that you had a Commonwealth Games in 1980. You've got a national rugby stadium, loads of top quality football pitches, Hibs, Hearts. I personally think the facilities here, for the size of the city, are pretty incredible.

Harry: Well that's probably a lot of the reason why Ulster is gaining in popularity because of what everyone else has said because the new stadium has great facilities. It's like pretty much every time there's a male toilet there's a female one like adjacent so it's completely 50/50 in terms of the facilities. I'd say there's a lot less of a gender divide at the rugby as well because there seems to be a lot of families going. There seems to be lots of husbands getting their wife a season ticket so she's not giving him a hard time on a Friday night and all. But it seems to be, like I'd say females are quite well represented just maybe – I'm not sure if it's just because they've been brought along or it's just because maybe the sport itself lends itself more to being a bit of a social event so you don't have to be hugely interested but it's good to go along.

10. Choice: The range of professional sports on offer to watch live

Choice of sports was not something that appeared to feature organically as part of focus group discussion largely because individual participants tended to relay opinions and experiences only in relation to their preferred sport(s). However, when asked to specifically reflect on this issue, many began to readily recount the diversity of sporting opportunity in their respective cities. Jamie, for example, attempted to describe the complexity of the sporting landscape in London:

Jamie: Well, London, you think, awesome, a lot of sports but, because it's so diverse you can't think of some, you just think a lot of sports,

Robin focused on the choices available in amateur sport in Bristol and the way in which this added to the quality of life in the city:

Robin: I think the quality of life in Bristol as a city is really, really high. It's consistently … one of the cities in the country to live in and we do lots of really good things … We do the running it's 10K, the turnout for those and the half marathons is fantastic, it's a really amazing atmosphere … So, there's lots of stuff going on here, but you have to look for it.

Meanwhile, Ray provided an overview of the range of sports hosted by Birmingham and the collective impact that this has on the complexion and profile of the city:

Ray: I think Birmingham as a sporting city it's got everything. I mean it attracts top sports men, we've got the NEC, we've got two professional, top professional sides, you've got the Solihull Barons and you've got Moseley Rugby, you've got Warwickshire Cricket …Birchfield Harriers with the athletics. You've got virtually everything in Birmingham and a variety of sports ... The facilities we've got, parking, public transport and the family participation from grassroots, there's clubs and some of the professional footballers and cricketers have these clubs where the kids go in the school holiday and they'll teach them. And they're all accessible. Yeah, I think Birmingham is a great city for sport.

11. Sporting History: The historical sporting success

Like the subject of 'choice', that of sporting history did not naturally emerge as an explicit topic of conversation in focus group discussion however, it was articulated when notions of 'tradition' came to the fore. Matt, for example, talked about the way in which tradition served as an underpinning to Cardiff's reputation as a modern-day sporting city:

Matt: And I think from Wales and Cardiff maybe … tradition and history really does contribute to it … even if you're not currently successful. I mean, you look at rugby for example in the 70s. You look at the global success … of Welsh rugby in terms of not just winning but in terms of style and enjoying the game and the skill. You know, I speak to guys that are from New Zealand and … they always want to play Wales … ...and with Cardiff City that's a club with a long kind of history I think that carries over even when you might say Cardiff's sides haven't been winning the Premiership and winning you know Heineken Cups. But

they've got a real long tradition and they're still ... I think maybe punching, maybe not as much as we want to but punching above their weight.

Reflecting on the influence that sporting tradition might have on modern-day perceptions of certain cities, Ray from Birmingham made some useful observations:

Ray: I think tradition, if you say Birmingham to people they wouldn't necessarily think of sport unless you lived in Birmingham and supported the teams. But if you said Manchester the first thing I bet everybody would think Manchester United in my opinion. Would you think Manchester United if someone says to you what's at Manchester?

Indeed, participants in Manchester were clear about the historical impact of the city's successful football teams:

John: To me if Manchester hadn't had a successful sporting team or whatever, there would be nothing to build on. So without that previous success that we've had in Manchester there would be nothing to celebrate and bring forward. If you look at Manchester now, not just 'cause of Manchester United [but] because of others things … I don't think … the sporting facilities in Manchester would be that good ...

12. Economic Impact: The impact of sport on the local economy

Whilst for the majority of focus group participants, sporting interest was primarily about personal pleasure and enjoyment, a number expressed views on the economic impact that sport might have on the local economy. Reflecting on the fortunes of Bristol, Richard offered the following thoughts:

Richard: I'm not sure if it's essential for a team, but … the effect on the economy is massive, it's worth millions of pounds to the economy in sporting success. Bristol as a city is suffering as a consequence generally. It's the perception … [of] the type of city it is, but the economy is suffering.

Likewise, Barry clearly recognised the importance of sport for economic growth in and around Cardiff:

Barry: The economy itself, the facilities you've actually got, the economy is going to be affected regardless ... The publicity that it would bring to the area in question, to encourage outside organisations beyond the sporting world if necessary to make the likes of headquarters in Cardiff … and that has worked and [been] proven by British Gas etcetera.

Participants in Leeds talked about how they had seen the economic impact of sport on other cities and the way in which, more recently, they had witnessed similar benefits in terms of particular sporting events:

Geoff: I'd say to other cities look what Leeds did with the Tour De France. The Tour De France cost Leeds … Leeds City Council spent £10 million on it. Someone like my mother said "Oh that's outrageous wasting Council Tax" and it … brought in many, many, many more times that in people coming to the area and everything and it has left a bit of a legacy.

Andy: The investment comes in spores and you always need a headline act right? … like the Tour De France. I was here for that and the buzz around the city was absolutely brilliant. But it dissipates very, very quickly. Unless you have momentum all the time of things going on the effect is zero.

4. QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

As noted above, we systematically identified the key themes emerging from the fan focus groups. These themes fed directly into the factors described below, which are considered important prerequisites of a 'great sporting city'. In what follows, we outline the process via which the ranking of cities was determined. This process was completed in four discrete stages. First, we generated a list of cities that would be considered for the ranking. Second, we used the themes emerging from the qualitative focus group data to generate questions for an online survey that solicited fan satisfaction on each of the 12 factors identified. Third, we used the fan survey results to apply weightings to the factors to establish the rankings. Finally, we used a combination of fan survey data and data retrieval methods to measure each factor and calculate the overall ranking. Below we describe each of these stages in more detail.

Stage 1: City Selection

There were a number of key stages in the city selection:

1) We took the latest Office of National Statistics (ONS) population figures (Annual Mid-year Population Estimate, June, 2014) and, where necessary the 2011 Census population figures, and deemed that a population of > 130,000 was an appropriate cut-off.

2) Next, we removed any metropolitan areas that could not be classed as a city from the ONS population figures (e.g., Isle of Wight, Neath Port Talbot).

3) Next, we removed feeder cities to London (e.g., Slough, Wycombe), Manchester (e.g., Bury, Rochdale) and Leeds (e.g., Wakefield, Castleford), which are served by their larger metropolis.

4) Finally, we removed a number of smaller cities on the basis that they have no professional football, rugby union, rugby league, or cricket clubs and therefore would be redundant in any analysis (i.e., nothing to score on; Warwick, Bridgend).

This process led to the final list of 48 cities that went forward for analysis.

Stage 2: Fan Survey

Having selected our cities, we then used the themes emerging from the fan focus groups (see above) as the basis of an online survey which was administered (to sports fans) between 22nd May and 22nd June 2015. The survey had two main aims. First, we wanted to solicit fan

satisfaction on each of the factors derived from the focus group data for the city that they lived in. Second, we asked each fan to rank each of the factors derived from the focus group data in order of importance so that we could weight the factors accordingly in our ranking analysis (i.e., if 14% of fans in the fan survey ranked *Value for money as* the most important factor then the *Value for money* factor would be assigned a weight of 0.14 in our ranking analysis).

We knew that we would be able to collect data on 7 factors from freely available 'external' data sources (viz. *Value for money, Participation, Club success, Venues, Choice, Sporting history,* and *Economic impact*), whereas we relied on 'internal' fan survey satisfaction data for the remaining 5 factors (viz. *Local talent, Atmosphere, Community, Transport,* and *Social*). Before any manual weighting had occurred, an initial adjustment was made to the weighting of our factors so that the quality of the data was reflected in the overall ranking analysis. That is, because the 'external' factors provided the highest quality data (in terms of sample size, validity, and measures employed), they were initially adjusted to have a marginally higher weighting than the 'internal' factors, which are more prone to sampling error. To apply this initial adjustment, the 'external' factors began the ranking with a 10.7% (i.e., 0.107*7 = 0.75) weighting, whereas the internal factors began the ranking with a 5% (0.05*5 = 0.25) weighting. The manual weightings derived from the survey were then added post-hoc to this initial adjustment. The relative weighting for each factor is listed in the *Factor Measurement and Weighting* section. The demographics of the fan survey data can be found in Table 2

Table 2. Demographics of the fan survey

City	Gender			Age						
	Total *n*	M	F	< 18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	> 65
London[1]	1199	1000	199	16	116	400	240	204	152	71
Reading[2]	139	92	47	2	9	21	31	31	30	15
Liverpool[3]	134	104	30	1	2	19	27	47	29	9
Glasgow	131	95	36	1	6	15	30	38	30	11
Manchester[4]	129	109	20	1	10	32	24	15	29	18
Leeds[5]	124	86	38	-	12	22	22	26	27	15
Edinburgh	117	85	32	3	7	15	22	29	28	13
Nottingham	112	72	40	1	5	15	32	25	17	17
Gloucester[6]	106	69	37	1	15	18	23	18	21	10
Newcastle[7]	103	69	34	-	2	10	15	28	26	22
Leicester	102	81	21	-	9	15	17	33	14	14
Bristol	101	69	32	-	10	16	24	13	22	16
Birmingham[8]	93	83	10	-	13	16	20	22	16	6
Swansea	92	67	25	-	7	13	16	12	21	23
Brighton[9]	91	68	23	-	3	11	23	19	17	18
Coventry	88	53	35	2	7	11	14	17	24	13

Milton Keynes	88	62	26	-	5	15	12	24	18	14
Bath[10]	88	68	20	2	15	15	8	13	25	10
Bradford[11]	85	59	26	-	7	12	17	26	11	12
Cardiff	84	61	23	1	6	13	22	20	12	10
Northampton	83	56	27	-	6	9	20	17	18	13
Norwich	81	51	30	-	6	21	10	15	18	11
Oxford	81	57	24	1	10	24	14	10	10	12
Bournemouth[12]	79	46	33	1	12	8	11	15	17	15
Southampton[13]	79	54	25	-	6	10	18	14	22	9
Aberdeen	79	58	21	1	5	14	20	14	13	12
Sheffield	77	52	25	-	6	12	18	20	11	10
Plymouth	77	50	27	1	11	14	11	19	9	12
Luton	77	58	19	1	6	14	16	12	19	9
York[14]	77	49	28	-	9	16	15	14	15	8
Stoke-on-Trent	76	41	35	-	11	19	15	10	15	6
Preston	76	58	18	-	4	9	17	14	20	12
Peterborough	76	53	23	1	6	11	26	13	6	13
Portsmouth	74	48	26	-	6	8	11	14	19	16
Hull	74	45	29	-	7	9	15	10	19	14
Derby	72	41	31	-	1	14	10	22	16	9
Belfast	63	43	20	-	6	10	13	17	12	5
Dundee	63	41	22	2	8	9	13	16	13	2
Middlesbrough[15]	59	42	17	-	6	12	8	12	9	12
Sunderland[16]	57	39	18	-	1	7	19	12	8	10
Blackpool	54	30	24	1	2	6	10	13	15	7
Barnsley	54	23	31	-	12	3	17	9	10	3
Doncaster	54	29	25	-	3	10	9	15	12	5
Wigan	53	34	19	1	2	10	13	10	13	4
Blackburn[17]	53	37	16	-	4	6	17	10	8	8
Ipswich	52	35	17	1	3	13	8	11	14	2
Swindon	51	26	25	-	2	8	6	15	17	3
Bolton	50	31	19	1	2	13	8	12	5	9

Note: [1]Includes Inner and Greater London; [2]Includes Wokingham; [3]Includes Tranmere, Widnes and St Helens; [4]Includes Rochdale, Altringham, Oldham, Sale, Leigh, and Swinton; [5]Includes Castleford; [6]Includes Cheltenham; [7]Includes Gateshead; [8]Includes Wolverhampton, West Bromich, Walsall, and Moseley; [9]Includes Hove; [10]Includes North East Somerset; [11]Includes Keighley; [12]Includes Poole; [13]Includes Eastleigh; [14]Includes Harrogate; [15]Includes Stockton; [16]Includes Durham; [17]Includes Darwen. Total $n = 5,107$.

Stage 3: Factor Measurement and Weighting

From the fan survey, we obtained a set of data from which to weight the factors derived from the fan focus groups. We also had fan satisfaction ratings for use in the measurement of our 5 'internal' factors. The weightings (post initial adjustment and manual weighting) and measurement for each factor are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Factor weightings and measurement

Factor	Weighting	Measurement
Value for Money	16% (0.16)	This factor was measured by the ratio of the lowest home adult ticket price to median weekly wage for the professional football, rugby union, rugby league and cricket clubs in a given city.
Participation	8% (0.08)	This factor was measured by the percentage of adults participating in sport at least once a week (data from the Active People Survey, 2013, Sport Scotland, 2006, and the Active Adults Survey, 2009).
Local Talent	4% (0.04)	This factor was measured by fan satisfaction with the opportunity of young people to play for their local sports teams.
Atmosphere	12% (0.12)	This factor was measured by fan satisfaction with the sporting atmosphere and culture of their city.
Community	4% (0.04)	This factor was measured by fan satisfaction with club community involvement in their city.
Transport	4% (0.04)	This factor was measured by the satisfaction of fans with the transport links to and around their city's sporting venues.
Club(s) Success	15% (0.15)	This factor was measured by the average win:loss ratio of the professional football, rugby union, rugby league and cricket clubs in a given city.
Social	4% (0.04)	This factor was measured by the fan satisfaction with the social experiences for sport matches in their city.
Venues	9% (0.09)	This factor was measured by the ratio of aggregate sports venue capacity to city population.
Choice	8% (0.08)	This factor was measured by the aggregate number of professional football, rugby union, rugby league and cricket clubs in a given city.
Sporting History	9% (0.09)	This factor was measured by the average historical major trophy haul of the professional clubs in a given city.
Economic Impact	7% (0.07)	This factor was measured by the percentage of people employed in the sports industry in a given city (data from BRES, 2013).

Stage 4: Factor Measurement and Analysis

Once the weightings were assigned, the process of weighted-ranking could begin. This process comprised four stages:

1) We collected the raw data about the factors (see Table 3) for each city and placed it in a database.

2) Since the data differed qualitatively from factor to factor, we transformed the raw data onto a standardised 100 point scale. To do this, we applied a transformation formula; $100 * (x - min)/(max-min)$ where x is the value of the raw data, min reflects the minimum raw value, and max reflects the maximum raw value. Once the data was transformed, each raw data point for each factor conformed to a uniform scale and was therefore interpretable. For example, if city x takes a score of 57 for the *transport* factor then, when transformed, 57% of the cities in the dataset fall below city x on the *transport* factor.

3) The transformed score was subsequently weighted by multiplying it by a coefficient that corresponded to the weighting assigned from the aforementioned survey analysis (see Table 3).

4) The transformed and weighted scores for all factors were then added together to form an overall total for each city. These totals were then used to rank the cities.

This process is schematised in Table 4:

Table 4. Hypothetical score calculation for city x

Factor	Weight	Raw data	Transformed score	Coefficient	Transformed and weighted factor score
Value for money	60%	0.05	100	.60	60
Club Success	30%	4.2	74	.30	22.2
Choice	10%	0.000009	22	.10	2.2
Total	100%			1.0	84.4

Note: For illustrative purposes only.

The measurement of each factor is detailed below:

Value for Money (16%)

Value for money was a key theme emerging from the focus groups as identified in the qualitative data analysis. We therefore retrieved data on the lowest full price adult home ticket from the professional football (men's and women's), rugby union, rugby league, and cricket clubs in each city. We then averaged these prices for all the clubs. To control for regional variations in purchasing power, we divided the average lowest full price adult ticket in each city by its middle (median) weekly per capita income using data from the Office of National Statistics (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, April, 2014). This function gave us the ratio of average full price lowest adult ticket price to median income.

Participation (8%)

Opportunities for sports participation was another strong theme to emerge from the fan focus groups. We therefore retrieved information regarding the participation of adults in sport for each city. This data came from the Active People Survey (2013) for the English cities, the Active Adults Survey (2009) for the Welsh cities, and Sport Scotland (2007) for the Scottish cities. The data we retrieved provided a percentage of adults who participated in sport *at least once a week*. This percentage thus provided an indication of the level of sports participation for each city.

Local Talent (4%)

Opportunities in a city for 'home grown' local talent to flourish emerged as a theme across the fan focus groups. We measured this factor using data from the fan survey described in stage 2. Here, fans were asked to respond to a local talent item ("How would you rate the opportunity for young sporting talent from your city?") on a Likert scale from 1 (*Very Poor)* to 10 (*Very Good).* For each city, we took the mean response of the city's participants on this item as the score for the local talent factor.

Atmosphere (12%)

Sporting atmosphere was another strong theme to emerge across the fan focus groups. As with local talent, we measured this factor using data retrieved from the fan survey described in stage 2. Here, fans were asked to respond to an atmosphere item ("How would you rate the sporting atmosphere and environment during the live matches you have attended over the past year in your city?") on a Likert scale from 1 (*Very Poor)* to 10 (*Very Good).* For each city, we took the mean response of the city's participants on this item as the score for the atmosphere factor.

Community (4%)

As can be seen in the qualitative data analysis, strong links between the local community and the sports clubs was perceived to be important to focus group participants. We therefore measured this community factor using data from the fan survey. Here, fans were asked to respond to a community item ("How would you rate the links between professional sports clubs in your city and the local community?") on a Likert scale from 1 (*Very Poor)* to 10 (*Very Good)*. For each city, we took the mean response of the city's participants on this item as the score for the community factor.

Transport (4%)

Focus group participants were consistent in their view that good transport to and from venues were crucial to a good sporting city. We therefore took data from the fan survey to measure this factor. Here, fans were asked to respond to a transport item ("How would you rate the transport links servicing the sporting venues you have attended in your city?") on a Likert scale from 1 (*Very Poor*) to 10 (*Very Good)*. For each city, we took the mean response of the city's participants on this item as the score for the transport factor.

Club Success (15%)

As can be seen in the qualitative data analysis, the recent success of the professional clubs in a city was important for focus group participants. We therefore retrieved data on the win:loss ratio of the most recently completed season for the professional football (men's 2014-15; women's 2014), rugby union (2014-15), rugby league (2014), and cricket (2014) clubs in each city. For football, win:loss ratios for clubs in the Scottish and English Premier League, Women's Super League 1 and Scottish Women's Premier League, Scottish and English Championship, Women's Super League 2, Scottish and English League One, Scottish and English League Two, and the English Conference were retrieved. For rugby union, win:loss ratios for clubs in the English Premiership, Celtic Pro 12, and the English Championship were retrieved. For rugby league, win:loss ratios for clubs in the Super League and the Championship were retrieved. For cricket, win:loss rations for the County Championship and T20 Blast for all major counties were retrieved. Alongside the domestic win:loss ratios, we also retrieved win:loss ratios for the major European championships (viz. Men's and Women's Champions League; Europa league; Heineken Cup; Challenge Cup; World Club Series). As the data contained various levels of competition within sports (i.e., Premier League and Championship) it was necessary to weight the win:loss ratios according to their relative

reputation (so a win in the Champions League is worth more than a win in the Conference). The competition weights can be seen in Table 5. Following the calculation of the weighted average win:loss ratios, we then added a bonus weighting of 20% to the cities with a club(s) who had won a major trophy in the most recent completed season. The bonus weights can be seen in Table 6.

Table 5. Competition weightings for the club success factor

Competition	Weighting
Champions League (Football)	2.50
Women's Champions League (Football)	2.50
Heineken Cup (Rugby Union)	2.50
World Club Series (Rugby League)	2.50
Europa League (Football)	2.25
Challenge Cup (Rugby Union)	2.25
English Premier League (Football)	2.00
Women's English Super League (Football)	2.00
Celtic Pro 12 (Rugby Union)	2.00
English Premiership (Rugby Union)	2.00
Super League (Rugby League)	2.00
County Championship One (Cricket)	2.00
T20 Blast (Cricket)	2.00
English Championship (Football)	1.75
Women's English Championship (Football)	1.75
English Championship (Rugby Union)	1.75
English Championship (Rugby League)	1.75
County Championship Two (Cricket)	1.75
Scottish Premier League (Football)	1.50
Women's Scottish Premier League (Football)	1.50
English League One (Football)	1.50
Scottish Championship (Football)	1.25
English League Two (Football)	1.25
Scottish League One (Football)	1.00
English Conference (Football)	1.00

Social (4%)

Another theme to emerge from the fan focus groups was the quality of social opportunities and experiences for fans at sporting events. To measure this factor, we took data from the fan survey. Here, fans were asked to respond to a social item ("How would you rate the social opportunities and experiences available at the matches you have attended over the past year in

your city?") on a Likert scale from 1 (*Very Poor*) to 10 (*Very Good*). For each city, we took the mean response of the city's participants on this item as the score for the social factor.

Table 6. Bonus weighting for major trophy

City	National Venue(s)	Bonus Weighting
London	Premier League (Chelsea); FA Cup (Arsenal); League Cup (Chelsea); Aviva Premiership (Saracens); LV Cup (Saracens)	2.00
Leeds	Challenge Cup (Leeds Rhinos); County Championship (Yorkshire)	1.40
Liverpool	Rugby Super League (St Helens); Women's Super League 1 (Liverpool); Women's FA Cup (Everton)	1.60
Birmingham	T20 Blast (Birmingham Bears)	1.20
Gloucester	European Challenge Cup (Gloucester RFU)	1.20
Glasgow	Celtic Pro 12 (Glasgow Warriors); Scottish Premier League (Celtic); Scottish League Cup (Celtic)	1.60

Note: All other cities bonus weighted as 1.

Venues (9%)

The quality of the sporting venues servicing the cities emerged strongly as a focus group theme. The venues in a given city are highly skewed by the population they service. Hence, this factor was measured using the ratio of the aggregate sporting venue capacity of the sporting venues in each city to the city population. To calculate this ratio, we retrieved data on the maximum capacities for the football, rugby union, rugby league, and cricket venues in each city and divided this aggregate by the city's population using data from the Office of National Statistics (Annual Mid-year Population Estimate, June, 2014). Cities housing national venues (e.g., Wembley, Murrayfield) were allocated a 20% bonus weighting per venue, on top of their ratio of aggregate venue capacity to population, to reflect the opportunity of fans in that city to view national events. These bonus weightings are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7. Bonus weighting for national venues

City	National Venue(s)	Bonus Weighting
London	Wembley; Twickenham; Lords; Olympic Stadium	1.80
Manchester	Old Trafford	1.20
Cardiff	Millennium Stadium	1.20
Glasgow	Hampden Park	1.20
Edinburgh	Murrayfield	1.20
Belfast	Windsor Park	1.20

Note: All other cities bonus weighted as 1.

Choice (8%)

In the focus groups, the range of available professional sports to watch live emerged as a strong theme in our analysis. We therefore measured choice as the aggregate number of professional football (men's and women's), rugby union, rugby league, and cricket clubs in each city.

Sporting History (9%)

According to the fan focus groups, sporting history was a key factor in what constitutes a great sporting city. To measure this factor, we retrieved data on the major trophy haul of each of the professional clubs in each city and averaged these to provide an indication of historical success per city. We define a major trophy as league trophies for the top division of each respective sport (i.e., football, rugby union, rugby league, and cricket) and any domestic cups that are nationally competitive (e.g., FA Cup, LV Cup, Challenge Cup, etc.). We also retrieved data on major European and International trophies in football, rugby union, rugby league and cricket (e.g., Champions League, Heineken Cup, World Club Series, etc.). As with the club success factor, the data contained various levels of competition within sports (i.e., Premier League and League Cup). It was thus necessary to weight the average historical trophy haul according to their relative esteem (so a Champions League trophy is worth more than a League Cup). The weighted average of the aggregate historical trophy haul of the clubs in a given city served as the sporting history factor. The trophy weighting are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. Trophy weightings for the sporting history factor

Trophy	Weighting
Champions League (Football)	2.50
Women's Champions League (Football)	2.50
Heineken Cup (Rugby Union)	2.50
World Club Series (Rugby League)	2.50
Other European (Football)	2.25
Other European (Rugby Union)	2.25
English Premier League (Football)	2.00
Women's English Premier League (Football)	2.00
Celtic Pro 12 (Rugby Union)	2.00
English Premiership (Rugby Union)	2.00
Super League (Rugby League)	2.00
County Championship One (Cricket)	2.00
T20 Blast (Cricket)	2.00
English FA Cup (Football)	1.75
LV Cup (Rugby Union)	1.75
Challenge Cup (Rugby League)	1.75

English League Cup (Football)	1.50
Scottish Premier League (Football)	1.50
Women's Scottish Premier League (Football)	1.50
Scottish Cup (Football)	1.25
Scottish League Cup (Football)	1.00

Economic Impact (7%)

The final theme to emerge from our qualitative analysis of the fan focus groups was the economic impact of sport. We therefore retrieved data on the percentage of the overall workforce employed in the sports industry for each city with data from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES, 2013) and the Scottish Household Survey (SHS, 2013). The Scottish data was unavailable for the regions of Aberdeen, Dundee, and Edinburgh and so percentages for these cities were the overall Scottish average.

5.   KEY FINDINGS

Key Finding 1: Manchester places 1st (pipping London to top spot)

Manchester emerged as the UK's Greatest Sporting City 2015. This achievement owed much to its consistent performance, where it placed in the top quarter of cities for 7 of the 12 factors. It also finished top for the venue and local talent factors. The performance is commensurate with the sporting reputation of Manchester, which hosts two of the top English football teams (Manchester City and Manchester United) and a number of high profile rugby clubs (e.g., Sale, Leigh). Its overall performance ensured that the city had just enough to squeeze the two other 'big' sporting cities, London and Glasgow, into 2nd and 3rd place respectively.

Key Finding 2: Glasgow top Scottish city

Glasgow emerged as the top Scottish sporting city in our analysis, ranking 3rd overall. This should come as no surprise given the dominance of Celtic and Rangers football clubs meaning that Glasgow is rich in sporting history (and indeed finished top on this factor). Interestingly, Glasgow scored bottom on participation and did poorly for economic impact – with the other Scottish cities outperforming Glasgow on these factors. Beating Glasgow is always going to be a tough task, however, Edinburgh ranked a respectable 9th – largely due to its high fan satisfaction and international rugby venue (Murrayfield). Dundee and Aberdeen did less well at 26th and 39th respectively.

Key Finding 3: Cardiff top Welsh city

Cardiff was the top Welsh city, ranking 10th overall. Not surprisingly, Cardiff's top ten finish owed much to its high score on venues (2nd overall). It also ranked inside the top quarter of cities on participation and value for money. Interestingly, Cardiff's close rival Swansea emerged in 36th place. Swansea had very high fan satisfaction, but performed in the bottom 15% on choice, history, and venues. It also finished bottom on value for money, largely because of the £35 cheapest adult ticket at Swansea City FC.

Key Finding 4: Sunderland places 4th

Following Manchester, London, and Glasgow, Sunderland emerged as the fourth best sporting city in the UK. Its ranking owes much to its excellent scores on the value for money and success factors, which put Sunderland in the top 20% of cities for each. As success on these

factors weighed heavily on the overall ranking, Sunderland performed extremely well. Credit must largely go to Sunderland FC's Women's football team for their excellent 2014 season (losing only once), and for the value for money which their games offer (£4 adult ticket). These high scores ensured that Sunderland reigned supreme in the North East, above local rivals Newcastle (16th) and Middlesbrough (34th).

Key Finding 5: Derby fares well in 8th place

Another interesting finding in our analysis was that Derby performed very well, placing eighth overall. This ranking was largely due to its strong showing on the 'atmosphere' and 'value for money' factors – Derby emerged as the city with the best value for money. Here, credit must go to Derby County FC who offer exceptional value with a £10 adult match day ticket – well below the Championship average. Value for money was the most important factor for the fans in our focus groups, and this was reflected in Derby's excellent performance in the rankings. Also of note with Derby's excellent performance is that it was ranked the best city in the Midlands, outranking their rivals Birmingham (17th), Coventry (43rd), Nottingham (20th), Leicester (18th), Peterborough (37th), and Northampton (33rd).

Key Finding 6: Birmingham ranks 17th

England's second city, Birmingham, emerged from our analysis in what might be considered a disappointing 17th place. Fan satisfaction with the city was modest and it hovered around mid-table for the fan survey factors (viz. local talent, atmosphere, community, transport, and social). In addition, the city performed poorly on the economic impact, participation, and success factors (bottom 3rd of cities). The good news for Birmingham is that it performed strongly on value for money (top 30%), and had a solid rank for history (6th overall), so with improved fortunes for the success of its clubs there is no reason why it cannot break into the top 10 in future years.

Key Finding 7: Blackpool finishes bottom

Blackpool emerged from our analysis in bottom place. This was largely due to high levels of fan dissatisfaction displayed by the survey factors (bottom in all but one). Blackpool also scored poorly on choice, history, value for money, and success. This could be attributed to the unrest surrounding Blackpool FC, who endured a torrid 2014-15 season both on and off the pitch. There is work to be done if Blackpool is to rebuild its sporting reputation.

Key Finding 8: Specific factor accolades

Alongside the overall headline findings, there were some interesting specific factor accolades. Most notably, Bath finished top on fan satisfaction with links between sport and the community, as well as on participation with 45% of its population participating in sport at least once a week. In another interesting finding, Bolton finished highest on economic impact with 5% of its workforce employed in the sports industry. Bristol emerged as the city with the most sporting success, owing largely to the strong performance of its Rugby Union team losing only once all season. The transport factor was won by Newcastle and the social factor was taken by Norwich. The individual factor accolades are listed below:

(1) Local talent: Manchester highest (1st overall ranking).

(2) Atmosphere: Swansea highest (36th overall ranking overall).

(3) Community: Bath highest (21st overall ranking).

(4) Transport: Newcastle highest (16th overall ranking).

(5) Social: Norwich highest (28th overall ranking).

(6) Economic impact: Bolton highest (45th overall ranking).

(7) Participation: Bath highest (21st overall ranking).

(8) Choice: London highest (2nd overall ranking).

(9) Success: Bristol highest (7th overall ranking).

(10) Venues: Cardiff highest (10th overall ranking).

(11) History: Glasgow highest (3rd overall ranking).

(12) Value for money: Derby highest (8th overall ranking).

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this report has been to provide an analysis of the opinions of sports fans in relation to what they regarded as the key factors which make up a great UK sporting city. In doing so, the report has sought to portray the extent to which such factors may not only influence and determine public opinion about sport, but also about the wider geographical contexts which fans inhabit.

Findings confirm that infrastructural investment around sport (i.e. transport, venues etc.) has the potential to attract major sporting events and that this relationship is symbiotic. Likewise, such investment holds significant benefits for fans in terms of access to sports both as participants and spectators (i.e. choice, participation etc.). Economic factors are also important both at the individual and collective level. In addition, rankings were influenced markedly by fans' perceptions of value for money and the way in which sporting success (past and present) impacted wider economic circumstance. On this factor in particular, fans were extremely keen to see sport become more affordable and this factor helped place cities offering value for money high up the ranking (i.e., Derby).

Though perhaps less influential, the social aspects of sport were highlighted as integral to both the sporting experience itself (i.e. atmosphere) and the impact which sports teams/clubs may have on their local communities. These latter factors, of social opportunity and community, feed into a broader sense that it is important for sport to connect with the citizens of each city through outreach and public engagement. Growing as a sporting city is not solely down to the success of teams and clubs.

The programme of research and subsequent ranking system outlined in this report offer an important advancement in the assessment of sports provision within cities. In turn, they provide the first systematic benchmark from which cities in the UK may be judged on the quality of their sporting facilities, communities, and achievements. This system is driven by fan opinion and is changeable, with cities likely to shift from year to year. Therefore, this work provides the basis from which subsequent rankings may be guided and it is hoped that the information presented herein will stimulate much debate on the impact of sport across the UK.

Appendices

Appendix A

<u>Focus Group Locations</u>

Location	Date	Time
London	Friday 24th April 2015	12.30pm – 1.30pm
Bristol	Monday 27th April 2015	12.30pm – 1.30pm
Edinburgh	Monday 27th April 2015	6.30pm – 7.30pm
Cardiff	Tuesday 28th April 2015	6.30pm – 7.30pm
Leeds	Tuesday 28th April 2015	6.30pm – 7.30pm
Birmingham	Wednesday 29th April 2015	12.30pm – 1.30pm
Manchester	Wednesday 29th April 2015	6.30pm – 7.30pm
Belfast	Tuesday 5th May 2015	5pm – 6pm

London
ESPN EMEA / 3 Queen Caroline Street / Hammersmith / London / W6 9PE

Bristol
Ground Floor Meeting Room, ESRC South West Doctoral Training Centre, University of Bristol, 1 Priory Road, Bristol, BS8 1TX

Edinburgh
Holyrood Suite - Thistle Edinburgh, The King James, 107 Leith Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3SW

Cardiff
Raglan Suite - Thistle Cardiff City Centre, The Parc, Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3UD

Leeds
Mal Five - Malmaison Leeds, 1 Swinegate, Leeds, LS1 4AG

Birmingham
Vancouver House, 111 Hagley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 8LB

Manchester
Royce Suite - Midland Manchester, Peter St, Manchester, M60 2DS

Belfast
Mal 1 - Malmaison Belfast, 34-38 Victoria Street, Belfast, BT1 3GH

Appendix B

Focus Group Schedule

Section One: Participant backgrounds

1.1   What city are you from?
1.2   What sports do you follow?
1.3   Which clubs/teams do you support?

Second Two: Fan-club relationship

2.1   How often do you attend your club's matches live?
2.2   As a fan, can you describe your experiences of supporting your club team?
2.3   What factors do you hold most important as a fan of your club team?

Section Three: Factors that make up a great sporting city

3.1 Do you regard your city as being associated with a particular sport or sporting experience? If so, what is this and why?
3.2 In your opinion, what factors do you think make up a great sporting city?

Potential probes/follow-up questions
3.3 In terms of sport, what have been your experiences of value for money in your city?
3.4 How does your team's performance/success influence how you view your city as a sporting city?
3.5 How important do you think entertainment value is for a great sporting city?
3.6 How would you describe the fan experience to be in your city?
3.7 In what ways (if at all) do you think sport has had an (economic) impact on your city?

Section Four: Summary

4.1 If you had to pick three factors that make up a great sporting city, what would they be?
4.2 Is there anything else that you'd like to say about your experiences of sport in your city?

Focus Group Themes (Factors)

Table 1: Factors that make up a great sporting city (according to the 8 focus groups)

Factor	London	Bristol	Cardiff	Edinburgh	Leeds	Birmingham	Manchester	Belfast	TOTAL
Value for money	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Grassroots (viz. Participation and Local Talent)	X	X	X		X		X	X	6
Atmosphere	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Community	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Transport/Accessibility	X			X	X	X	X	X	6
Club(s) Success	X	X	X	X	X		X		6
Social		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Venues		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Choice		X		X		X	X	X	5
Sporting History		X	X	X		X			4
Economic Impact				X		X	X	X	4
Entertainment around event (e.g., amenities)	X		X			X			3
Timing of matches	X								1
Availability of tickets	X								1
Vibe/scenic attractions/culture/tourism				X		X			2
Infrastructure				X			X		2
People (e.g., supporters)			X	X	X			X	4
Headline sport (e.g., football)					X				1
Safety						X		X	2
Rivalry							X	X	2
Ownership/identity								X	1
Media representation								X	1
Loyalty (regardless of support)								X	1

Note: The top half of the table represents the final list of factors that were subsequently included in the survey (the criteria for inclusion was that the factor was mentioned by ≥ 4 out of 8 focus groups). The bottom half of the table represents the other (less popular) factors that were mentioned by the focus groups but were not included in the survey.