

GENDER INFLUENCE IN ASSESSING SPORTS POTENTIAL IN SHAPING THE IMAGE OF THE LUBLIN BRAND

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Purpose: The primary objective of this study is to identify and evaluate the factors influencing the creation of Lublin's sports image that are significant for women and men. The study addresses two research questions: (1) Which factors contributing to Lublin's sports potential are crucial for shaping its image depending on gender? (2) What is the hierarchical importance of dimensions that constitute Lublin's sports image according to the opinions of women and men?

Design/methodology/approach: The study utilizes Anholt's Hexagon City Brands framework. Data necessary to determine the hierarchy of key factors affecting the creation of Lublin's sports image were collected through an online survey (CAWI) administered to 204 residents of Lublin. Opinions were gathered on the six dimensions of the city brand hexagon: *presence*, *place*, *potential*, *pulse*, *people*, and *conditions*. The study tests three hypotheses: (H1) The hierarchy of factors determining the sports image of the city differs by gender; (H2) The dimension of presence contributes most significantly to shaping Lublin's sports image among men; (H3) The dimension of pulse contributes most significantly to shaping Lublin's sports image among women. The second hypothesis is conditioned by considering the results of the sports teams in the presence dimension, while the third hypothesis is based on the consideration of residents' sports activities.

Findings: The study reveals minor differences in the hierarchy of factors determining the sports image of Lublin in the opinions of women and men. The most significant dimension for the city, as rated by both genders, is *pulse* (with an average score of 4.05; 4.09 for women and 4.01 for men). The second strongest dimension is *conditions* (with an average score of 4.01; 4.10 for women and 3.92 for men). Following dimensions are ranked in order of average ratings: *potential* (3.63; 3.71 for women and 3.56 for men), *presence* (3.42; 3.42 for women and 3.43 for men), *place* (3.14; 3.24 for women and 3.07 for men), and *people* (2.97; 2.94 for women and 3.01 for men). Thus, Hypothesis H1 is accepted as the hierarchy of factors shaping the sports image of Lublin differs significantly by gender, with *conditions* and *pulse* being the most important dimensions for women and men respectively. Hypothesis H2 is rejected, as the most critical dimension shaping the sports image of Lublin for men is not *presence* but *pulse*. Similarly, hypothesis H3 is also rejected, as the most important dimension shaping the sports image of Lublin for women is *conditions* rather than *pulse* as hypothesized. If hypothesis H3

were subjected to falsification, assuming that both *pulse* and *conditions* are important for women, it could be accepted in this revised form.

Practical Implications: The findings of this study provide a basis for formulating practical recommendations concerning the development of Lublin's sports infrastructure, as these factors are rated as the most important for the city. There is also a need to cautiously avoid promoting sports clubs exclusively as city landmarks, as their operational ratings heavily depend on the current situation in their respective leagues. Furthermore, the authorities of Lublin should focus on attracting high-ranking sports events, both national and international, as they enjoy high approval from both genders, bring visibility to the city, boost the local economy, and help distinguish Lublin among other Polish metropolises. There is also a need for greater involvement of city authorities in the creation and development of sports infrastructure and promotion of sports activities in the city.

Originality/Value: This article presents an original study concerning the potential use of sports in shaping a city's image. Its originality lies in the novel application of Anholt's City Brand Hexagon for a selected set of factors (representing city's identity) perceived by respondents to contribute to the image of the city.

Keywords: City image, City brand hexagon, Sports, Women and men.

Category of the paper: Research article.

1. Introduction

The concept of city image is one of the most frequently discussed categories in territorial marketing (Govers, 2009; Florek, Kavaratzis, 2014; Daszkiewicz, 2017; Boisen et al., 2018). This is due to its ability to aggregate all characteristics of a place under a common marketing narrative, serving as an informational umbrella (Romanowski, 2013). Over time, city branding has gained recognition for its ability to promote tangible and intangible benefits to tourists, investors, and even local residents (Gilboa et al., 2015; Oshimi, Harada, 2019).

Publications concerning place image have evolved over the years. Initially, publications attempted to transfer solutions assigned to the image of products and firms to cities. Subsequently, a unique methodology for city branding research emerged, accounting for the creation of umbrella brands or sub-brands, considering diverse target groups. One of the current areas of exploration is the study of residents who represent internal stakeholders of marketing entities responsible for the space they operate in (Yu et al., 2023). Furthermore, various marketing actions influencing both the overall and specific images are analyzed (Anholt, 2007; Romanowski et al., 2024).

One of the areas where a city can influence its image is through sports. The objective of this paper is to identify and evaluate the factors influencing the creation of Lublin's sports image that are significant for women and men. This paper addresses two research questions: (1) Which factors contributing to Lublin's sports potential are crucial for shaping its image, depending on gender? (2) What is the hierarchy of importance of the dimensions that constitute Lublin's sports image according to the opinions of women and men?

2. Literature Review

The role of gender in evaluating sports potential and its implications for brand development is a critical area of study, particularly in the context of regional and municipal branding efforts. In the case of Lublin, a city with a rich cultural and sporting history, the intersection of gender dynamics and sports potential significantly impacts its brand image and marketing strategies.

Gender serves as a lens through which sports potential is often perceived, with societal expectations and stereotypes influencing the evaluation process. For instance, men's sports tend to receive greater visibility and investment, often shaping public perception of athletic excellence and regional pride (Elling, Knoppers, 2005). Conversely, women's sports, though increasingly recognized, often face challenges related to funding, media representation, and societal attitudes (Waśkowski, 2022), which can limit their contribution to the overall sports-driven branding of a city like Lublin (Fink, 2015).

The sports sector contributes to Lublin's brand identity by promoting values such as teamwork, perseverance, and community engagement. Gender-inclusive approaches in assessing sports potential can enhance the city's image, projecting it as progressive and equitable (Darnell, Sparks, 2005). For example, promoting women's sports alongside men's not only diversifies the city's brand but also aligns with contemporary values of gender equality, potentially attracting a broader demographic of tourists, investors, and residents (Bruce, 2016).

Moreover, gender-inclusive policies in sports branding can foster community cohesion. By celebrating achievements across all genders, Lublin can position itself as a leader in championing diversity and inclusion, thereby strengthening its regional and global identity. The integration of both male and female athletes in city-sponsored events and promotional campaigns underscores a balanced and comprehensive representation of sports potential (Cooky et al., 2015). A deliberate focus on gender equity in sports can amplify the city's reputation, foster inclusivity, and ensure that its brand resonates with diverse audiences. Future research and strategic initiatives should prioritize gender-aware frameworks to maximize the impact of sports in municipal branding efforts.

To evaluate the effectiveness of activities related to image building, appropriate methods and measurement tools must be employed. These methods allow for the identification of both strengths and weaknesses of a city across multiple dimensions, including its image (Nowacki, Zmyślony, 2011).

It is essential to remember that a city's image varies depending on the specific stakeholders involved such as tourists, investors, employees, consumers, residents, and students. This underscores the importance of measuring the image comprehensively (Malara, Sobol-Wojciechowska, 2011). Image measurement also enables comparative analysis with other cities, providing valuable insights for strategic positioning.

Two significant trends can be identified in discussions surrounding the relationship between sports and place branding. The first pertains to the preparation of a strategic set of information and imagery about a city, including potential shifts in perception, designed to attract world-class events—so-called mega-events—to the location (Hereźniak, Florek, 2018; Kim, Kim, Cho, Yim, 2019; Moon, Ko, Connaughton, Lee, 2013; Yu et al., 2023). The second trend focuses on stimulating sports tourism (Gilboa et al., 2015; Gonzalez, Gale, 2022; Preuss, Arne Solberg, 2015; Styliadis, Sit, Biran, 2016). These trends often overlap, as cities, regions, or nations without the requisite sports infrastructure rarely secure the rights to host mega-events.

However, there is a notable lack of publications addressing the perceptions of residents in the context of place branding aimed at fostering sports tourism. Since sporting events have been shown to impact both residents and tourists across economic, ecological, social, and cultural dimensions (Poczta, Dąbrowska, Kazimierczak, Gravelle, Malchrowicz-Moško, 2020), they are frequently leveraged for city branding purposes (Oshimi, Harada, 2016).

The goal in such cases can be to create, alter, or refresh a city's image while simultaneously promoting sports or fostering societal engagement (Bosiacki, Śniadek, 2012). A city's sports image is shaped by strategies and initiatives in both sports marketing and territorial marketing. This image results from actions or the outcomes of strategies and plans that form perceptions of the city concerning its sports offerings (Dużyk-Dyna, 2016).

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In summarizing the issue of shaping a city's brand image, it is essential to emphasize that this is a long-term process influenced by numerous factors. The city's image serves multiple functions, bringing various tangible benefits to the municipality. For this reason, it should be subject to systematic management and control.

Moreover, the image of a place is not static; it can undergo transformations as a result of events occurring within the city and actions initiated by local governments. These dynamics highlight the need for proactive and adaptable strategies to maintain and enhance the city's brand image in response to changing circumstances and stakeholder expectations.

3. Objective and Methodology

The objective of this article is to identify and evaluate the factors influencing the creation of Lublin's sports image that are significant to both women and men. The study addresses two research questions: (1) Which factors contributing to Lublin's sports potential are crucial for shaping its image, depending on gender? (2) What is the hierarchy of importance of the dimensions that constitute Lublin's sports image according to the opinions of women and men?

The presented research continues the discussion initiated in the publication by Bloch, Romanowski, & Romanowski (2024). In this study, a decision was made to utilize holistic model that take into account many aspects of a city's functioning, such as Simon Anholt's Hexagon City Brands (2006) (Figure 1.).

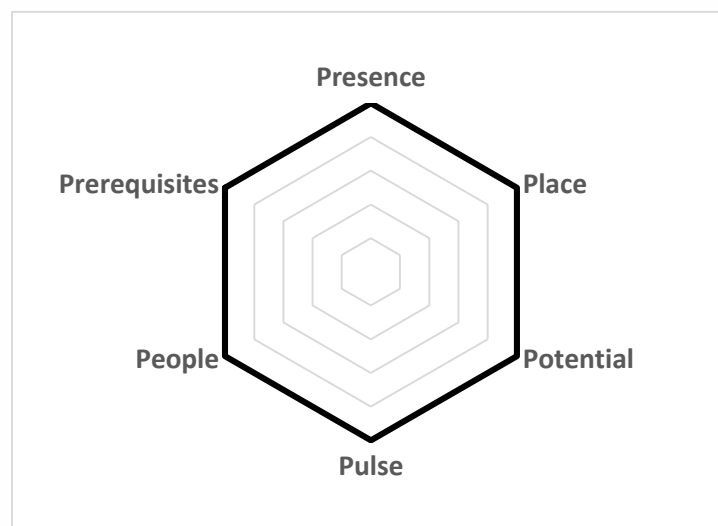


Figure 1. Anholt's City Brand Hexagon.

Source: Anholt, 2007, p. 85.

The model proposed by Simon Anholt consists of six dimensions that can be presented graphically in the form of a hexagon, and which is measured using an index - Anholt-Ipsos City Brand Index (2006). The index is estimated based on the average of the dimensions that make up the model. The first dimension is Presence, referring to the international status and position of the city. The second is the attractiveness or physical appearance of the place (Place), this means a favorable climate for living, the cleanliness of the natural environment or the attractiveness of buildings and public places. The third component is Prerequisites, which determine what features determine the choice of a city, such as: price attractiveness, standard of public facilities (e.g. hospitals or schools), public transport or sports facilities in the city. The People dimension refers to the characteristics and behavior of local residents. This aspect also refers to the sense of security in the city. Pulse describes the possibility of filling your free time with various types of additional activities. The indicated level also specifies the city's level of excitement about new places to discover. Potential measures

educational and economic benefits in the city, the possibility of finding a job in line with expectations, and the degree of ease of doing business (Anholt, 2007).

The research tool used for the study is a survey questionnaire consisting of 11 questions. Each section of the questionnaire corresponds to a specific dimension that constitutes the Anholt City Brand Hexagon Model. Within each dimension, respondents are presented with several statements to evaluate on a scale from 0 to 5, where 0 indicates no influence on shaping the city's sports image, and 5 represents a very significant impact. The final section of the survey includes demographic questions that allow for respondent segmentation and the development of appropriate conclusions. The questionnaire was distributed on May 26, 2023, and the study was completed by June 9, 2023.

The primary purpose of this research was to understand the factors contributing to the sports image of Lublin and how they vary based on demographic variables. The survey was segmented into six dimensions:

1. *Presence*: this dimension concerns the city's position on a national or international scale. In the context of sports, factors such as sports clubs or infrastructure play a crucial role.
2. *Place*: this dimension describes the physical aspects of the city. It focuses on specific sports facilities and their impact on the city's sports image.
3. *Conditions*: this dimension examines societal expectations and the availability of factors that contribute to the city's sports potential. In the case of Lublin, it highlights the components that act as drivers for sports development in the city.
4. *People*: refers to the characteristics and behaviors of local residents, including aspects like security and social integration.
5. *Pulse*: evaluates the vibrancy of the city, including leisure activities and opportunities for social interaction.
6. *Potential*: measures the city's economic and educational benefits, job opportunities, and business conditions (Anholt, 2007).

The data collected allowed for a nuanced analysis of how these dimensions influence the sports image of Lublin, providing insights into gender-based differences that can guide targeted strategies for city branding (Table 1).

The study included 204 participants, all over the age of 18, and residents of the city of Lublin. The choice of city residents was based on the premise that those familiar with their city are more competent to evaluate the factors relating to Lublin's image.

The snowball method was used as the sampling method. The advantage of this method is its ability to reach specific individuals in cases of relatively narrow sample groups or significant numerical discrepancies, such as gender, education level, or age. Residents of the city were asked to further distribute the questionnaire to other potential respondents residing in Lublin. The method proved highly effective for individuals over the age of 40.

Table 1.*Dimensions of the city hexagon with assigned factors of Lublin brand related to sports*

Presence	Place	Potential	Pulse	People	Prerequisites
<i>Sport clubs</i> Motor Lublin (speedway) MKS Lublin (handball women) Motor Lublin (football men) MKS Start Lublin (basketball men) AZS UMCS Lublin (athletics) LUK Lublin (volleyball men) AZS UMCS Lublin (basketball women) <i>Infrastructure</i> Stadium „Arena Lublin” Aquapark „Aqua Lublin” Sport hall „Globus”	Bicycle paths Swimming pools "Orlik" sports fields Tennis courts Climbing walls Skate parks	Possibility of organizing international sports events Possibility of earning money from sports Possibility of associating in sports institutions	Sports events Sports infrastructure in general Sports clubs Athletes Sports activity of residents Society activation programs Sports staff	Residents's willingness to engage in sports recreation in the city Other city residents' willingness to engage in sports recreation Residents' willingness to create a sports image of the city Residents' willingness to associate in sports institutions	Availability of sports infrastructure in the city Availability of attractive sports events in the city Availability of programs that activate society Availability of appropriately qualified sports staff

Source: own elaboration

Two research questions were addressed:

Which factors that make up the sports potential of the city of Lublin are key to creating its image depending on gender?

What is the hierarchy of importance of dimensions that make up the sports image of Lublin in the opinions of women and men?

Three hypotheses were formulated:

H1: The hierarchy of factors influencing the sports image of the city varies depending on gender.

H2: The presence dimension contributes most to the creation of the sports image of the city of Lublin among men.

H3: The pulse dimension contributes most to the creation of the sports image of the city of Lublin among women.

The second hypothesis considers the performance results of sports teams within the presence dimension, while the third hypothesis is based on the sport activities of residents.

4. Analysis of the Lublin brand Hexagon's Dimensions Based on Respondents' Opinions

A survey was conducted with 204 participants, consisting of 101 women (49.5%) and 103 men (50.5%). The majority of respondents had a higher education level (57.4%), followed by those with secondary education (24.5%), vocational education (12.7%), and primary education (5.4%) (see Figure 1).

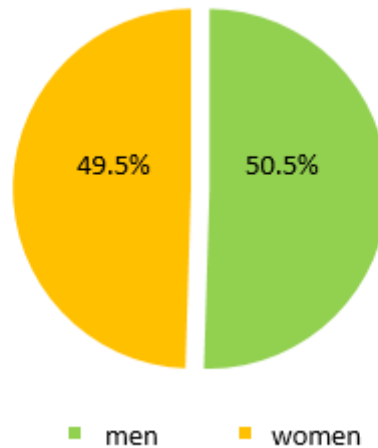


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by gender.

Source: own elaboration.

The largest group of participants in the study consisted of individuals with higher education (57.4% of respondents). Smaller groups included participants with secondary education (24.5%), vocational education (12.7%), and primary education (5.4%). The high percentage of respondents with higher education can be attributed to the distribution of the questionnaire among peers of the researcher conducting the study (figure 2).

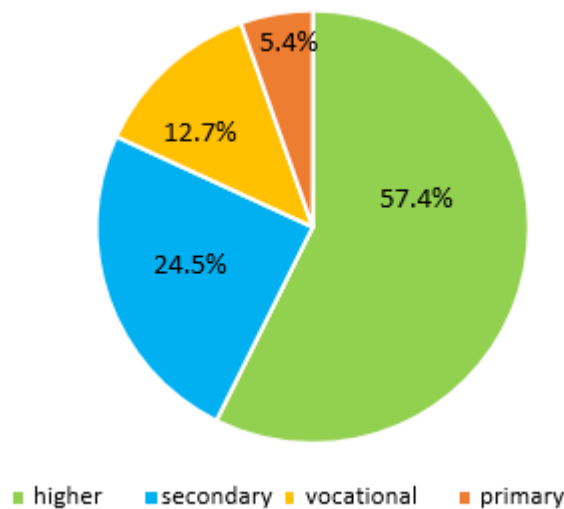


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents' educational background.

Source: own elaboration.

Analyzing age distribution (Figure 3), the largest group of respondents was aged 18-29 years (32.4%). This distribution reflects the distribution of the survey among a large number of peers of the researcher. Other age groups were as follows: 50-59 years (20.1%), 40-49 years (17.6%), 30-39 years (16.2%), and 60 years and older (13.7%).

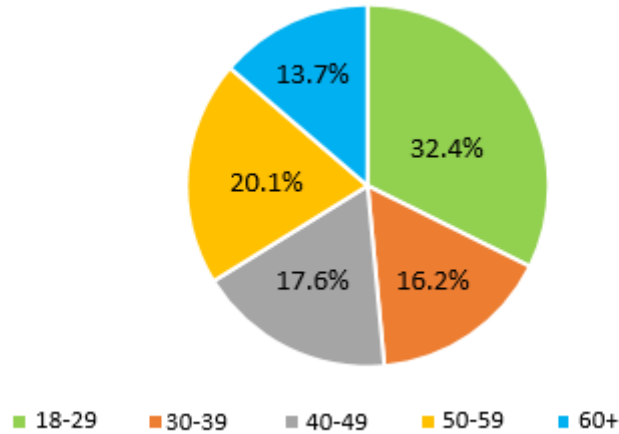


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by age.

Source: own elaboration.

The first analyzed dimension was *presence* (Table 2). This issue was considered from the perspective of the impact of sports clubs and infrastructure on the sports image of the city of Lublin. Regarding sports clubs, residents indicated that the most significant impact on the sports image of the city is by the speedway club Motor Lublin (average rating – 4.41). This may be related to the club's very good performance. In 2021, the club won the national vice-championship, and as of June 10, 2022, the team is leading the speedway Ekstraliga. The second highest-rated team is the women's handball team MKS Lublin with an average rating of 3.99. The football team Motor Lublin follows with an average rating of 3.66, despite not having major achievements in recent years, competing in the 2nd League (third tier after Ekstraklasa and 1st League). Other clubs received much lower scores ranging from 2.24 to 2.63, despite competing at the highest levels.

Table 2.

Assessment of sports clubs by gender

The influence of factors on creating the sport image of Lublin	Women	Men	Total
Motor Lublin (speedway)	4.42	4.41	4.41
MKS Lublin (handball women)	4.02	3.95	3.99
Motor Lublin (football men)	3.72	3.60	3.66
MKS Start Lublin (basketball men)	2.60	2.66	2.63
AZS UMCS Lublin (athletics)	2.44	2.68	2.57
LUK Lublin (volleyball men)	2.41	2.73	2.56
AZS UMCS Lublin (basketball women)	2.20	2.28	2.24

Source: own elaboration.

Regarding the impact of sports clubs by gender, women showed a more favorable view of high-average factors among the overall respondents. In contrast, the order of importance assigned to the clubs varied for men. For instance, the athletic club AZS UMCS Lublin occupied the fourth position for men but sixth for women, and the basketball team MKS Start Lublin took the sixth position for men but fourth for women.

The study explores significant disparities in respondents' opinions when evaluating aspects of the sports image of the city of Lublin from the perspective of educational background. The top three clubs maintained their order across each educational level group, but substantial differences emerged within other educational groups. Individuals with basic education ranked the volleyball club LUK Lublin (5th overall) fourth in influencing the city's sports image, while those with secondary education listed the athletic team AZS UMCS Lublin (6th overall) in the same position. Notably, substantial average differences were observed across various factors between groups with different educational backgrounds. For the athletic team (AZS UMCS Lublin), the difference between individuals with basic and higher education was 1.02. For the football club Motor Lublin, the difference between individuals with basic and secondary education was 0.90, while for the speedway club Motor Lublin, it was 0.78. Excluding volleyball and athletics, it can be concluded that individuals with basic education acknowledge the least influence of sports clubs on shaping the sports image of Lublin.

Regarding the influence of infrastructure facilities on shaping the sports image of the city, women rated the impact of each factor more favorably than men. These differences range from 0.02 in the case of Arena Lublin to 0.30 in the case of Globus Hall (Table 3).

Table 3.

Assessment of infrastructure facilities by gender

The influence of factors on creating the sport image of Lublin	Women	Men	Total
Stadium „Arena Lublin”	4.36	4.34	4.35
Aquapark „Aqua Lublin”	4.07	3.93	4.00
Sport hall „Globus”	3.99	3.69	3.84

Source: own elaboration.

In evaluating the influence of infrastructure facilities on the development of Lublin's sports image, respondents identified *Arena Lublin Stadium* as having the greatest impact, with an average rating of 4.35. This was followed by *Aqua Lublin* (4.00) and *Globus Hall* (3.84). Notably, all the infrastructure facilities received relatively high ratings, underscoring their significance as factors contributing to the creation of Lublin's sports image.

The second analysed dimension was *place* (Table 4). Residents of Lublin identified bike paths (4.24) as the most significant urban infrastructure element affecting the city's sports image. The city continues to expand its infrastructure for cyclists, with 109.63 km of bike paths available, including the *Lubelski Rower Miejski* system. Pools (3.81) were the next most important factor, with facilities like *Aqua Lublin* and others at local schools and universities. Moderately influential were *Orlik* playgrounds (3.24), tennis courts (2.75), climbing walls

(2.54), and skateparks (2.34). Notably, climbing walls received relatively low influence ratings, despite being the birthplace of world record holder Aleksandra Mirosław in speed climbing.

Table 4.

Assessment of place dimension by gender

The influence of factors on creating the sport image of Lublin	Women	Men	Total
Cycle paths	4.33	4.15	4.24
Swimming pools	4.04	3.59	3.81
"Orlik" sports fields	3.28	3.20	3.24
Tennis courts	2.89	2.61	2.75
Climbing walls	2.56	2.51	2.54
Skate parks	2.35	2.33	2.34

Source: own elaboration.

In every aspect, women rated the influence of various factors higher than men (table 5). Both sexes maintained the same hierarchy of importance. The most significant gender disparity was observed in the influence of pools, with a 0.45-point difference between the two groups.

The study related to *prerequisites* identifies the availability of infrastructure (4.45) and attractive sports events (4.35) as the most important factors in shaping the sports image (table 5). Moderate roles include programs that engage society (3.75) and the availability of qualified sports staff (3.49). When comparing genders, women consistently rated these aspects higher than men, maintaining the same hierarchy of importance.

Table 5.

Assessment of prerequisites dimension by gender

The influence of factors on creating the sport image of Lublin	Women	Men	Total
Availability of sports infrastructure in the city	4.50	4.40	4.45
Availability of attractive sports events in the city	4.47	4.24	4.35
Availability of programs that activate society	3.82	3.67	3.75
Availability of appropriately qualified sports staff	3.61	3.36	3.49

Source: own elaboration.

Analyse of age differences shows significance in results, especially concerning the availability of sports programs (Table 6). The gap between the 30-39 age group and those 60 and older was 1.28, with older groups showing stronger preferences for available sports programs and events. The oldest group had an average rating higher than the overall respondent average (4.45).

Table 6.

Assessment of prerequisites dimension by age

The influence of factors on creating the sport image of Lublin	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Total
Availability of sports infrastructure in the city	4.08	4.48	4.64	4.73	4.61	4.45
Availability of attractive sports events in the city	3.12	3.09	3.53	3.90	4.14	4.35
Availability of programs that activate society	3.47	3.18	3.75	4.15	4.46	3.75
Availability of appropriately qualified sports staff	4.08	4.36	4.47	4.49	4.64	3.49

Source: own elaboration.

People dimension examines residents' proclivities towards pro-sport behaviours and their relation to shaping the city's sports image (Table 7). Respondents generally rate their own inclination towards recreational sports higher than other residents. The gender differences analysis indicates that men rate their personal inclination towards sports recreation in the city 0.56 points higher than others. This statement holds true for men but not universally for all respondents.

Table 7.

Assessment of people dimension by gender

The influence of factors on creating the sport image of Lublin	Women	Men	Total
Residents's willingness to engage in sports recreation in the city	3.19	3.58	3.39
Other city residents' willingness to engage in sports recreation	3.19	3.02	3.10
Residents' willingness to create a sports image of the city	2.75	2.73	2.74
Residents' willingness to associate in sports institutions	2.61	2.70	2.66

Source: own elaboration.

Respondents were asked to evaluate the influence of the *pulse* factors on the creation of Lublin's sports image (Table 8). Residents identified *sporting events* as having the greatest impact, with an average rating of 4.52. These events, as previously mentioned, play a significant role in the city and often hold a high rank. The second most influential factor was *sports infrastructure* (4.40), which has been steadily developing through numerous modernizations and the construction of new facilities. This was followed by *sports clubs* (4.35), many of which compete in top-tier leagues, reflecting their strong performance as perceived by respondents.

Table 8.

Assessment of pulse dimension by gender

The influence of factors on creating the sport image of Lublin	Women	Men	Total
Sports events	4.56	4.48	4.52
Sports infrastructure in general	4.40	4.40	4.40
Sports clubs	4.34	4.37	4.35
Athletes	4.24	4.17	4.20
Sports activity of residents	3.95	3.82	3.88
Society activation programs	3.64	3.47	3.55
Sports staff	3.53	3.36	3.45

Source: own elaboration.

The fourth factor in the hierarchy was *athletes* (4.20). Other factors, in descending order of importance, included: *residents' sports activity* (3.88), *community activation programs* (3.55), and *sports personnel* (3.45), which includes roles such as coaches and trainers. Notably, four of the assessed aspects received an average rating above 4 on a 0–5 scale, highlighting their high significance in shaping the city's sports image, according to respondents. Women rated five out of the seven factors higher than men. The *sports infrastructure* factor received the same average score (4.40) from both genders, while *sports clubs* were rated higher by men.

The *potential* dimension describes the opportunities that sport in the city provides and their impact on the creation of Lublin's sports image (Table 9). Residents of Lublin perceive the ability to host international sports events (4.21) as the most critical factor. Lublin hosts

numerous high-ranking sports events, indicating a strong sports infrastructure. Moderately significant factors include earning potential from sports (3.48) and the ability to organize and join sports institutions (3.22).

Table 9.

Assessment of potential dimension by gender

The influence of factors on creating the sport image of Lublin	Women	Men	Total
Possibility of organizing international sports events	4.22	4.19	4.21
Possibility of earning money from sports	3.66	3.29	3.48
Possibility of associating in sports institutions	3.24	3.19	3.22

Source: own elaboration.

The *potential* dimension is also analyzed based on the respondent's gender (Table 10). While factors related to organizing international sports events and joining sports institutions were similarly rated, there is a noticeable difference regarding earning potential from sports (0.37 in favor of women).

Generally, women have a less favorable average attitude towards sports than men (Table 10). This trend extends to issues related to Lublin's city image based on sports and the use of sports in shaping the city's image. However, it is important to note that the average agreement score for each statement was above six on a seven-point scale, indicating a positive reception of these issues among both women and men.

Table 10.

Declaration of sport respondents' orientation by gender

Sport orientaion	Women	Men	Total
I have a positive attitude towards sports	6.14	6.46	6.30
I support creating the image of the city of Lublin based on sports	6.26	6.41	6.33
Sport can be used to create the image of the city of Lublin	6.36	6.49	6.42

Source: own elaboration.

It can be concluded that factors most influencing the creation of Lublin's sports image include: sports clubs (especially the speedway club *Motor Lublin*), *Arena Lublin Stadium*, sports events held in the city, and the city's sports infrastructure (especially cycle paths). Additionally, women tend to have a more favorable attitude towards many factors influencing the creation of the city's sports image compared to men. Furthermore, residents of the city have a positive attitude towards sports and support the creation of a Lublin brand based on sports.

5. Synthesis of the Lublin brand Hexagon's dimensions by gender

The next stage, involves calculating the average responses from each dimension and ranking them to determine which dimensions of the City Brand Hexagon for sports in Lublin are the most important for both genders (figure 4).

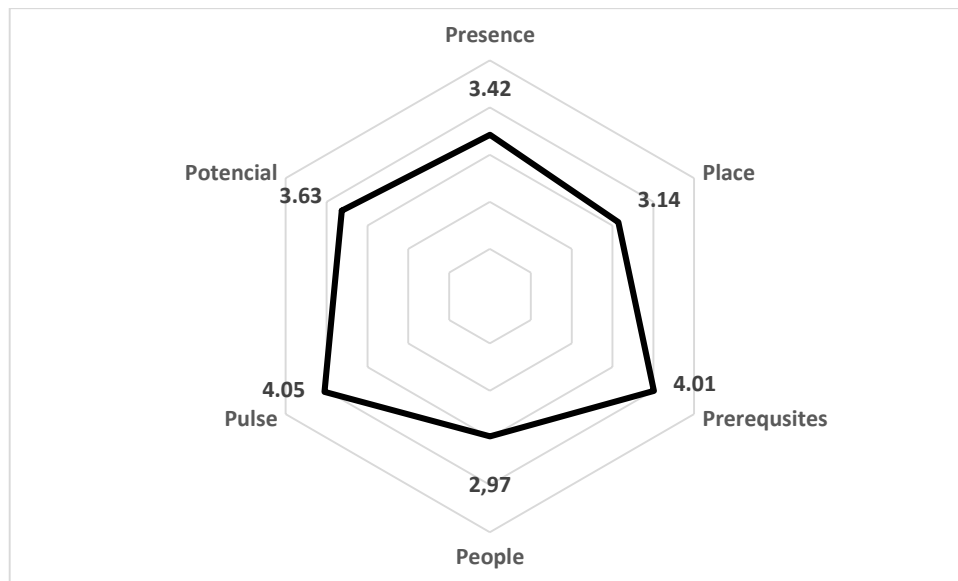


Figure 4. A hexagon for the sports image of Lublin – all respondents.

Source: own elaboration.

Analysing this from the perspective of all respondents, it can be noted that the strongest dimension of the city is the "Pulse" with an average of 4.05. This dimension includes aspects such as: sports events organized in the city, sports infrastructure, sports clubs, athletes associated with the city, residents' sports activity, sports activation programs, and sports staff. However, it is worth noting that just behind the *pulse* dimension, the second strongest dimension is *prerequisites* with an average of 4.01. The next dimensions in order of strength are: *potencial* (3.63), *presence* (3.42), *place* (3.14), and *people* (2.97). The difference between the strongest and the weakest dimension in the study was 1.08.

Analysing the Hexagon dimensions by gender (Figure 5), it can be concluded that for women, the strongest dimension shaping the sports image of the city is "Conditions" (average – 4.10). However, there is a minimal difference (0.01) between this dimension and *pulse*, which turned out to be the strongest when considering the responses of both genders. The next Hexagon dimensions for women are: *potencial* (3.71), *presence* (3.42), *place* (3.24), and *people* (2.94). For men, the strongest component of the Hexagon is *pulse* (similar to the overall respondents) with an average of 4.01. The next dimensions are: *prerequisites* (3.92), *potencial* (3.56), *presence* (3.43), *place* (3.07), and *people* (3.01). Analyzing the results. It can be stated that there are no significant differences between the two genders that could suggest the reasons for significantly differing strengths of a particular dimension for a specific group.

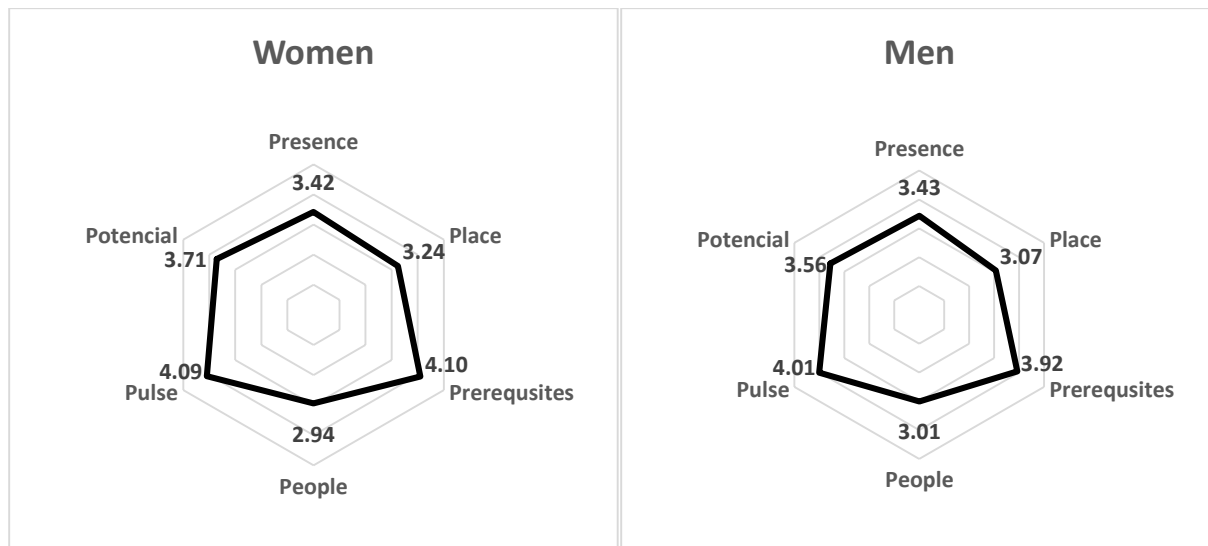


Figure 5. A hexagon for the sports image of Lublin by gender.

Source: own elaboration.

It is indicated that the strongest dimension of the City Brand Hexagon for sports in Lublin is *pulse*. This dimension concerns the impact of specific factors on creating the sports image of the city, including sports events, sports infrastructure, sports clubs, athletes, residents' sports activity, sports activation programs, and sports staff. As the respondent's age increases, this dimension is replaced by the *prerequisites* dimension, which relates to the impact of the availability of factors on creating the sports image of Lublin, such as the availability of sports infrastructure in the city, availability of attractive sports events, availability of programs to activate the community, and availability of properly qualified sports staff.

6. Conclusions and discussion

The research revealed minor differences in the hierarchy of factors shaping the sports image of Lublin, as perceived by women and men. The city's most prominent dimension, as rated by both genders, is pulse, with an average score of 4.05 for the entire population (4.09 for women and 4.01 for men). The second most significant dimension is conditions (overall average: 4.01; 4.10 for women and 3.92 for men). The subsequent dimensions, ranked by average scores, are: potential (3.63 overall; 3.71 for women and 3.56 for men), presence (3.42 overall; 3.42 for women and 3.43 for men), place (3.14 overall; 3.24 for women and 3.07 for men), and people (2.97 overall; 2.94 for women and 3.01 for men).

Consequently, Hypothesis H1 was confirmed, as conditions and pulse were identified as the most important factors influencing the sports image of Lublin among women, while pulse and conditions held the top positions for men. However, these differences are not substantial, as the rankings of the other dimensions within the hexagon remained unchanged regardless of gender.

Hypothesis H2 was rejected, as presence did not emerge as the most significant factor shaping Lublin's sports image among men, contrary to expectations; instead, pulse held this position. Similarly, Hypothesis H3 was rejected, as conditions were found to be the most important factor for women, rather than pulse as previously assumed. However, if hypothesis H3 were reformulated to suggest that pulse and conditions are equally important for women, it could be accepted in this revised form.

The study provided a basis for formulating practical recommendations for the development of Lublin's sports infrastructure, as these factors were identified as the most critical in shaping the city's sports image. The discussion surrounding the hypotheses highlights that gender plays an insignificant role in creating a city's image through sports. Separate campaigns targeting women or men should emphasize sports-related aspects rather than focusing on gender differences.

Furthermore, exclusive promotion of sports clubs as city representatives should be approached cautiously, as evaluations of their performance are heavily dependent on their current standing in respective leagues. Additionally, Lublin's authorities should prioritize attracting high-profile national and international sports events. Such events enjoy broad public support from both genders, enhance the city's reputation, stimulate local economic development, and help distinguish Lublin from other Polish metropolises. Emphasis should also be placed on increasing municipal involvement in the development of sports infrastructure and the promotion of physical activity within the city.

This article presents original research on the hierarchy of sports-related attributes in shaping a city's image, differentiated by gender. The study's novelty lies in the innovative application of the city brand hexagon to a selected set of sports-related factors (identity), which, according to respondents, contribute to the perception of the city (image).

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