



# MERIT REPORT ON MEDIA VALUE IN FOOTBALL

---

SEASON 2016/17



**Authors:**

**Pedro García del Barrio**

Academic director - MERIT social value  
*Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (UIC Barcelona)*

**Felipe Nicolás Becerra Flores**

*Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (UIC Barcelona)*

**Arnau Raventós Gascón**

*Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (UIC Barcelona)*

With the collaboration of:

**Josep María Espina Serra and Asier López de Foronda**

*Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (UIC Barcelona)*



## Contents

Main results	6
Presentation	7
1. MERIT Media Value Ranking – Football Players (2016/17)	9
2. MERIT Media Value Ranking – Promising Players	11
3. “Dream Team” – Season 2016/17	13
4. Comparative Media Value Growth – Top 30 Players	15
5. MERIT Media Value Ranking – Teams (2016/17)	17
6. Media Value Concentration – Major Players (2016/17)	19
7. Media Value Evolution of Domestic Leaders	21
8. Media Value Evolution of the “Big-5” European Leagues	23

## Main results

The following points summarize the principal results of the MERIT report on Media Value in Football (Season 2016/17):

- Cristiano Ronaldo overtakes his rival Lionel Messi to surmount the first position in the MERIT ranking of players.
- Real Madrid, winner of the UEFA Champions League and the La Liga, club with the greatest media exposure in season 2016/17, followed by FC Barcelona and Manchester United.
- The Juventus, having reached the UEFA Champions league final, ending as the runner-up of the competition, climb to the fourth position in the MERIT ranking, overtaking strong clubs like Chelsea FC or Arsenal FC.
- La Liga concentrates talent, as in 2016/17 seven of the Top-10 players were playing in the Spanish league. Then, the other three players in the worldwide Top-10 are found in the Premier League.
- Neymar strengthens a foremost role in the media, holding the third place in the MERIT ranking, behind the two superstars Ronaldo and Messi.
- Marcus Rashford leads the ranking of Youngers under 21, followed by the young French player Kylian Mbappe.
- In the fight for the hegemony among the Big-5 European leagues, two competitions prevail: the Spanish and the English leagues.

## Presentation

MERIT (*Methodology for the Evaluation and Rating of Intangible Talent*) is part of an academic project with enormous applications in the field of business and company management. This methodology has proved to be useful in measuring the economic value of talent in professional sports and in other entertainment industries. In the estimations and elaboration of rankings two elements are taken into account: the popularity (degree of interest aroused between the fans and the general public) and the media value (the level of attention that the media pays).

The measurements can be made at specific points in time over the season, or accounting for the news articles generated in a certain period: weeks, months, years, etc. Additionally, the homogeneity amongst the measurements allows for a comparison of the media value status of individuals, teams, institutions, etc.

In addition to calculations and rankings, our databases permit conducting analyses on a wide variety of economic and managerial problems: estimates of the market value (or “fair value”) of players’ transfer fees; calculation of the brand value of individuals, teams and leagues; valuation of the economic return from alliances between sponsors; etc. The usefulness of these rankings and measurements is clear, given the growing number of companies whose business relies on media exposure and popularity as sources of potential income.

In the context of football, MERIT addresses issues like:

- Ranking and media evolution of players, teams and leagues.
- Estimate of the “fair” market value for contracting players.
- Appraisal of seasoned players and promising youngsters.
- Regional analysis of media value rankings of players and teams.
- Analysis of perception and reputation of players and teams in the media.
- Players’ individual brands and evaluation of strategic alliances with clubs.
- Measurement of the visibility of the sports sponsorship.
- Identification of the hierarchy of teams and leagues.

The approach adopted by MERIT allows us to reach where others cannot. Often the crucial point is not to have more information at one’s disposal but to be able to rely on the appropriate methodology and capabilities for analysis.

Our team includes analysts that apply a methodology verified in academic forums, providing valuable data for decision-making in professional sport.

More information can be found in:

[www.meritsocialvalue.com](http://www.meritsocialvalue.com) | [www.uic.es/merit](http://www.uic.es/merit)



## 1. MERIT Media Value Ranking – Football Players (2016/17)

The following table shows the MERIT media value index of the most popular football players in season 2016/17. The values of the MERIT index are expressed with respect to the average of the 2,500 players with the highest media value (from a database of more than 5,000 players). Individual ratings are the number by which the number of news articles of a player multiplies those of the normal representative (average) player in the sample.

According to our results, in season 2016/17 Cristiano Ronaldo achieved a media presence 91.74 times greater than the average player. The other worldwide media superstar, Lionel Messi, came second with 90.59 points in the MERIT ranking.

Rank 2016/17	Player	Team	MERIT Media Value Index
1	Cristiano Ronaldo	Real Madrid	91.74
2	Lionel Messi	FC Barcelona	90.53
3	Neymar	FC Barcelona	42.94
4	Wayne Rooney	Manchester United	30.13
5	Zlatan Ibrahimovic	Manchester United	27.41
6	Gareth Bale	Real Madrid	25.35
7	Paul Pogba	Manchester United	22.75
8	Luis Suárez	FC Barcelona	22.35
9	Sergio Ramos	Real Madrid	21.57
10	Karim Benzema	Real Madrid	19.48
11	Marcelo	Real Madrid	18.54
12	James Rodríguez	Real Madrid	17.76
13	Andrés Iniesta	FC Barcelona	17.64
14	Romelu Lukaku	Everton FC	16.77
15	Alexis Sánchez	Arsenal FC	13.71
16	Francesco Totti	AS Roma	11.86
17	Álvaro Morata	Real Madrid	11.23
18	Gonzalo Higuaín	Juventus FC	11.00
19	Gianluigi Buffon	Juventus FC	10.94
20	Mesut Özil	Arsenal FC	10.69
21	Eden Hazard	Chelsea FC	10.49
22	Isco	Real Madrid	10.40
23	Antoine Griezmann	Atlético de Madrid	10.39
24	Gerard Piqué	FC Barcelona	9.01
25	Toni Kroos	Real Madrid	8.69
26	Diego Costa	Chelsea FC	8.61
27	Jordi Alba	FC Barcelona	8.42
28	Dani Alves	Juventus FC	8.38

29	Robert Lewandowski	Bayern Múnich	8.16
30	Ángel Di María	Paris Saint-Germain	7.62
31	Harry Kane	Tottenham Hotspur	7.62
32	John Terry	Chelsea FC	7.53
33	Bastian Schweinsteiger	Manchester United	7.45
34	Thiago	Bayern Múnich	7.38
35	Marco Verratti	Paris Saint-Germain	7.16
36	Philippe Coutinho	Liverpool FC	7.10
37	Paulo Dybala	Juventus FC	7.05
38	Leonardo Bonucci	Juventus FC	6.88
39	Pepe	Real Madrid	6.32
40	Thiago Silva	Paris Saint-Germain	5.92
41	Sergio Agüero	Manchester City	5.91
42	Edinson Cavani	Paris Saint-Germain	5.80
43	Luka Modric	Real Madrid	5.75
44	Sergio Busquets	FC Barcelona	5.71
45	Olivier Giroud	Arsenal FC	5.57
46	Falcao	AS Mónaco	5.50
47	Manuel Neuer	Bayern Múnich	5.49
48	David Silva	Manchester City	5.43
49	Javier Mascherano	FC Barcelona	5.34
50	Lucas	Paris Saint-Germain	5.20

---

**Source:** MERIT social value – Data Collection

As it happened in the previous season, La Liga concentrates the largest number of players in the Top-10: four playing for Real Madrid and three for FC Barcelona. Moreover, notice that just three teams gather all the media value leaders belonging to the Top-10: Real Madrid (4 players), FC Barcelona (3 players) and Manchester United (3 players).

After having completed a great season, Neymar holds the third position in the ranking; while the fourth and fifth place are respectively for Wayne Rooney and Zlatan Ibrahimovic, both important attackers in the Premier League

## 2. MERIT Media Value Ranking – Promising Players

The following table collects the results of a similar analysis applied to players younger than 21 years old. Our calculations follow the same criteria than in the regular MERIT media value ranking, with the difference that we only report here a selection of young players, an interesting exercise in order to identify future global superstars in football.

Rank 2016/17	Player	Team	MERIT Media Value Index
1	Marcus Rashford	Manchester United	4.97
2	Kylian Mbappé	AS Mónaco	4.89
3	Héctor Bellerín	Arsenal FC	4.66
4	Raheem Sterling	Manchester City	4.61
5	Luke Shaw	Manchester United	4.18
6	Dele Alli	Tottenham Hotspur	3.78
7	Anthony Martial	Manchester United	3.20
8	Kingsley Coman	Bayern Múnich	2.78
9	Gianluigi Donnarumma	AC Milán	2.64
10	Marco Asensio	Real Madrid	2.47
11	Ryan Christie	Celtic	2.14
12	Alex Iwobi	Arsenal FC	2.12
13	Liam Henderson	Celtic	1.99
14	Kelechi Iheanacho	Manchester City	1.83
15	Ousmane Dembélé	Borussia Dortmund	1.72
16	Leroy Sané	Manchester City	1.66
17	Julian Green	Bayern Múnich	1.65
18	Joshua Kimmich	Bayern Múnich	1.53
19	Gabriel	Inter Milán	1.52
20	Renato Sánchez	Bayern Múnich	1.44
21	Thomas Lemar	AS Mónaco	1.44
22	Moussa Dembélé	Celtic	1.43
23	Emre Can Atila	Konyaspor	1.08
24	André Silva	FC Porto	1.06
25	Emre Mor	Borussia Dortmund	1.03

Source: MERIT social value – Data Collection

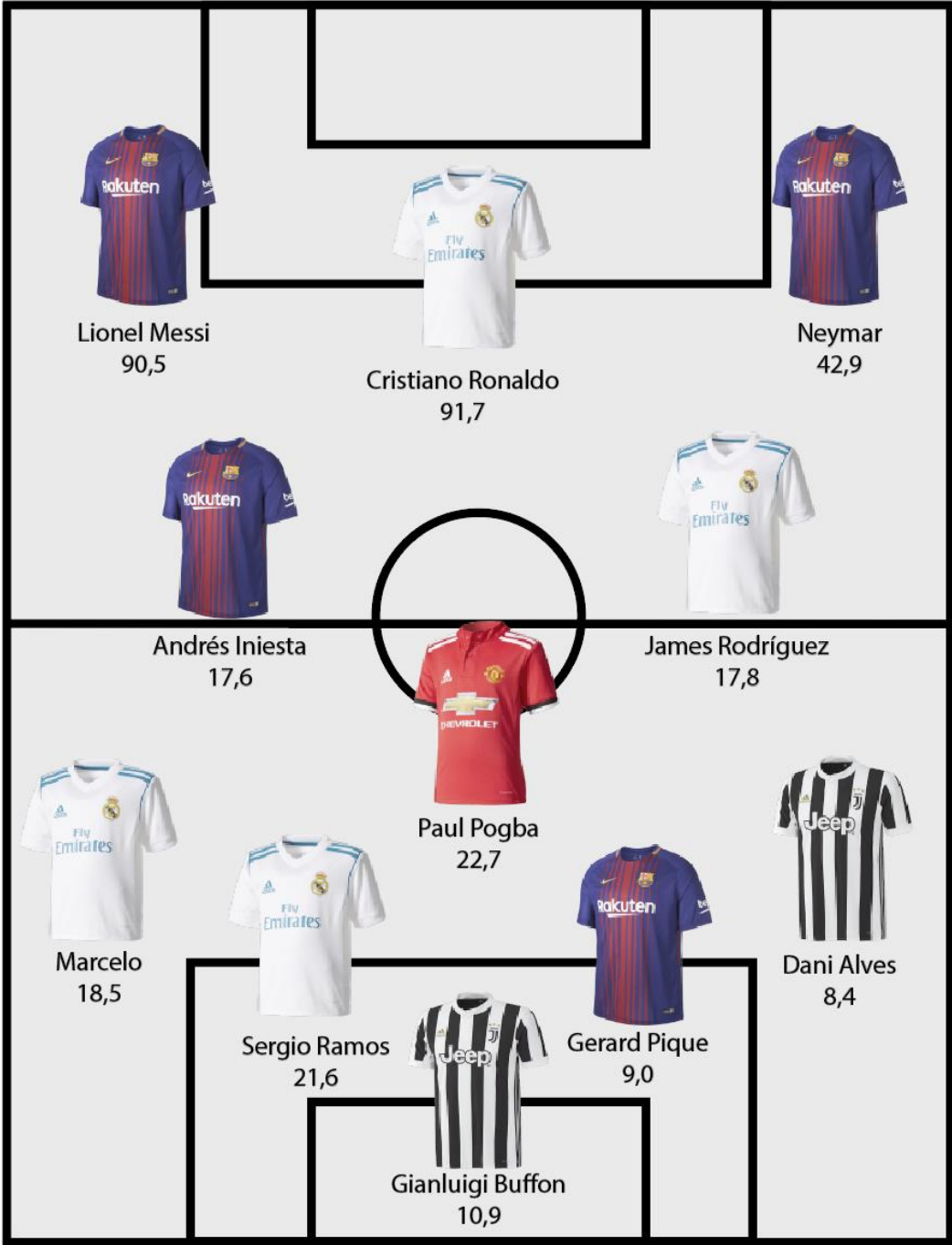
The table identifies 25 top young football players. Among this group we expect finding the main protagonists, in terms of media value and sport performance, in the years to come. At the top of the ranking we see Marcus Rashford (Manchester United), who made an astonishing season and reached a degree of visibility in the media 4.97 times higher than the average player in our sample.

Also at the top, and very close, is Kylian Mbappe (with 4.89 points), perhaps the most promising footballer playing in League 1. Then, in the third position, we find the Spanish defender Hector Bellerín, who accumulates 4.66 points in the ranking.

The results of our analysis unveil the superiority of the Premier League concerning future football superstars. Almost half of the players in the Top-25 ranking under-21 are actually playing in English teams, such as Manchester United, Arsenal FC and Manchester City. Nevertheless, the team that contributes the most to the ranking is found in the Bundesliga: Bayern Munich. The German team places up to four players in the Top-25, followed by Manchester United, Manchester City and Celtic, each of them with 3 players.

### 3. “Dream Team” – Season 2016/17

This section presents the “Dream team”, based on players’ media value ratings by position, in the 2016/17 season. The figure illustrates the results by locating in the football pitch the selected players for each position: keeper, defense, middle-field and attack. We find that Real Madrid contributes to the “Dream team” with more players than any other club.



The players in the “Dream Team” (season 2016/17) include:

- Goalkeeper: Gianluigi Buffon (10.9)
- Defenders: Jordi Alba (8.4) – Sergio Ramos (21.6) – Gerard Pique (9.0) – Marcelo (18.5)
- Midfielders: James (17.8) – Paul Pogba (22.7) – Andrés Iniesta (17.6)
- Forwards: Lionel Messi (90.5) – Cristiano Ronaldo (91.7) – Neymar (42.9)

Our analysis identifies the players with greater presence in the media in each field position.

First, Gianluigi Buffon defeats all the other goalkeepers to achieve the first place in that position. Among defenders, Sergio Ramos leads the contest with an exposure in the media 21.6 times higher than the average player. Then, other outstanding defenders follow: Marcelo, Pique and Jordi Alba.

In the midfield, Paul Pogba accumulates 15.61 points in the ranking, ahead of James and Mesut Özil. In attack, the first place goes to Cristiano Ronaldo, whose amazing season at Real Madrid permits beating his perpetual rival, Lionel Messi.

## 4. Comparative Media Value Growth – Top 30 Players

The table gathers the Top-30 players (in terms of media value) and compares variations on their media value indexes between seasons 2016/15 and 2015/14.

The calculations of these variations are presented in two ways: first, as the increase in absolute terms; and second, as the growth factor that results from dividing the MERIT index in season 2016/15 by that of 2015/14. In the table, the players are ranked from top to bottom according to the increasing factor from one season to the previous one.

Rank 2016/17	Player	Teams	Media Value 2016/17	Media Value 2015/16	Absolute Difference	Growth Factor
16	Francesco Totti	AS Roma	11.9	4.60	7.30	2.59 ▲
54	Marcus Rashford	Manchester Utd.	4.9	1.95	3.02	2.55 ▲
34	Thiago	Bayern Múnich	7.4	3.01	4.39	2.45 ▲
22	Isco	Real Madrid	10.4	6.14	4.26	1.69 ▲
57	Kylian Mbappe	AS Mónaco	4.8	2.91	1.98	1.68 ▲
5	Zlatan Ibrahimovic	Manchester Utd.	27.4	16.83	10.57	1.63 ▲
14	Romelu Lukaku	Everton	16.8	10.36	6.44	1.62 ▲
18	Gonzalo Higuaín	Juventus	11.0	6.87	4.13	1.60 ▲
1	Cristiano Ronaldo	Real Madrid	91.7	59.27	32.43	1.55 ▲
35	Marco Verratti	Paris St.Germain	7.2	4.69	2.51	1.54 ▲
7	Paul Pogba	Manchester Utd.	22.7	15.61	7.09	1.45 ▲
2	Lionel Messi	FC Barcelona	90.5	67.12	23.38	1.35 ▲
9	Sergio Ramos	Real Madrid	21.6	16.12	5.48	1.34 ▲
11	Marcelo	Real Madrid	18.5	14.05	4.45	1.32 ▲
19	Gianluigi Buffon	Juventus	10.9	8.61	2.29	1.27 ▲
12	James Rodríguez	Real Madrid	17.8	14.33	3.47	1.24 ▲
13	Andrés Iniesta	FC Barcelona	17.6	14.21	3.39	1.24 ▲
17	Álvaro Morata	Real Madrid	11.2	9.05	2.15	1.24 ▲
25	Toni Kroos	Real Madrid	8.7	7.03	1.67	1.24 ▲
10	Karim Benzema	Real Madrid	19.5	16.52	2.98	1.18 ▲
15	Alexis Sánchez	Arsenal	13.7	11.85	1.85	1.16 ▲
6	Gareth Bale	Real Madrid	25.4	23.65	1.75	1.07 ▲
3	Neymar Jr.	FC Barcelona	42.9	42.74	0.16	1.00 ▲
24	Gerard Pique	FC Barcelona	9.0	9.11	-0.11	0.99 ▼
4	Wayne Rooney	Manchester Utd.	30.1	30.49	-0.39	0.99 ▼
21	Eden Hazard	Chelsea	10.5	10.64	-0.14	0.99 ▼
23	A. Griezmann	At. de Madrid	10.4	10.88	-0.48	0.96 ▼
37	Paulo Dybala	Juventus	7.0	7.54	-0.54	0.93 ▼
26	Diego Costa	Chelsea	8.6	10.40	-1.79	0.83 ▼
27	Jordi Alba	FC Barcelona	8.4	10.45	-2.03	0.81 ▼

Source: MERIT social value – Data Collection

The analysis of the table identifies the players with the most significant changes regarding their visibility in the media: Totti, Rashford, Thiago, Isco and Mbappe.

The Italian legend about to retire, Francesco Totti, experienced an astounding change, improving his media status up to the 16th worldwide position in the 2016/16 ranking. Marcus Rashford is in the second position of the table. The performance of the Manchester United player was impressive since his debut on the field, attracting the spotlights from the media. Isco is another player who displayed a remarkable evolution. He has become a major protagonist due to the great performances exhibited with Real Madrid. Also the French young promise Kylian Mbappe has delivered great performance and results this season.

At the bottom of the table we find high-profile players that, having enjoyed in the past substantial attention from the media, see how their media exposure declined in season 2016/17.



## 5. MERIT Media Value Ranking – Teams (2016/17)

In this section we offer the MERIT media value ranking of the main football clubs in Season 2016/17. The clubs' indexes are obtained by aggregation of individual ratings of media value for the 15 most popular players of each team roster. The following table ranks the teams from 1 to 20 on the bases of their MERIT media value status.

Rank 2016/17	Team	League	MERIT Media Value Index
1	Real Madrid	La Liga	252.4
2	FC Barcelona	La Liga	228.0
3	Manchester United	Premier League	128.5
4	Juventus FC	Serie A	74.8
5	Chelsea FC	Premier League	63.9
6	Arsenal FC	Premier League	63.8
7	Bayern Múnich	Bundesliga	60.1
8	Manchester City	Premier League	48.1
9	Paris Saint-Germain	Ligue 1	45.1
10	Olympique Lyon	Ligue 1	34.3
11	AS Roma	Serie A	33.4
12	Atlético de Madrid	La Liga	31.8
13	Tottenham Hotspur	Premier League	30.8
14	Everton FC	Premier League	29.3
15	Besiktas	Süper Lig	28.6
16	Liverpool FC	Premier League	22.6
17	AS Mónaco	Ligue 1	20.8
18	Borussia Dortmund	Bundesliga	17.5
19	Leicester City	Premier League	16.7
20	Celtic de Glasgow	Scottish Premiership	16.6

Source: MERIT social value – Data Collection

Real Madrid, with an index of 252.4 points, leads the MERIT teams' ranking of teams in season 2016/17. The giant Spanish team, thanks to magnificent sport performance and titles' achievements this season (Champions League and Spanish League), generate an striking gap of 24 points with respect to its eternal rival, FC Barcelona.

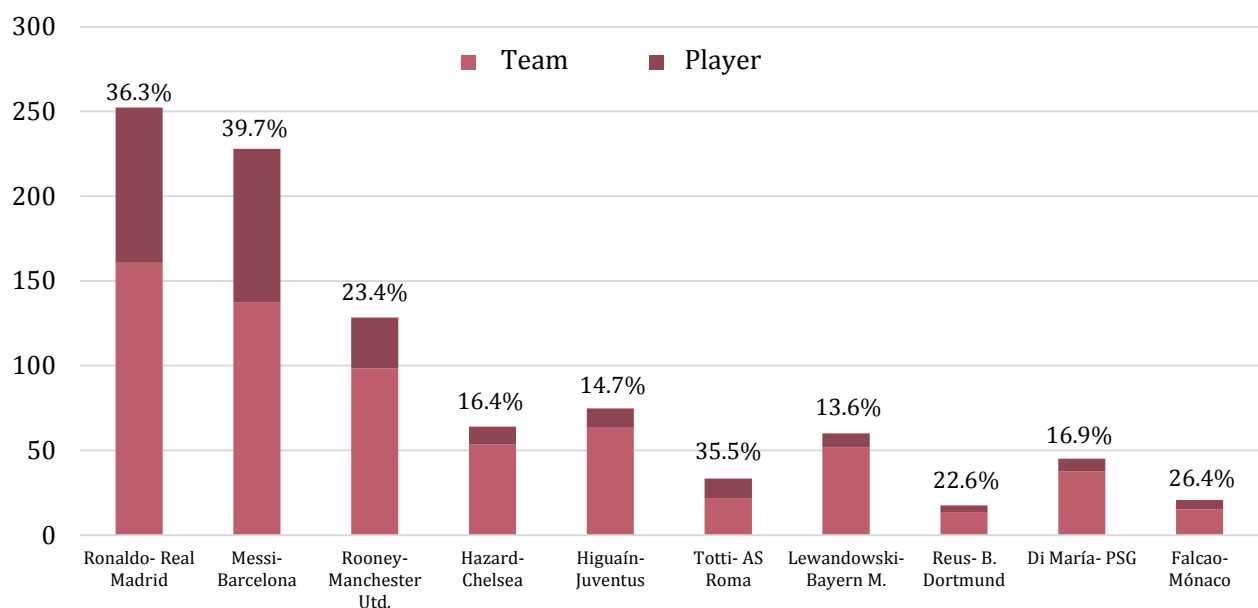
Behind the two Spanish leaders we found: Manchester United, Juventus and Chelsea FC. Then, it seems that in season 2016/17 the French league has increased its relative exposure in the media, as two clubs playing in Ligue 1 are found in the Top-10 worldwide ranking. Regarding Italy, we observe a reduction in media exposure, as the number of clubs in the Top-20 in the Serie A was reduced from five to only two.

Notice further that if we found a large concentration of players in La Liga at the top of the MERIT media value ranking of players, concerning the ranking of teams we find a greater number of English teams, implying a clear dominance of the Premier League in the Top-10: Manchester United, FC Chelsea, Manchester City and Arsenal FC.

## 6. Media Value Concentration – Major Players (2016/17)

In this section, we analyze the level of concentration of the main player’s media value as compared to the overall visibility in the media of their team. More importantly, this indicator conveys information on the degree of dependence that clubs have on their media superstars.

**Media Value Concentration**  
Main Player (2016/17)



**Source:** MERIT social value – Data Collection

A more detailed analysis allows us classifying different scenarios concerning the degree of media dependency of clubs on their main player. Considering for instance the case of Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, they both strongly depend on their main media icon and superstar: Cristiano Ronaldo gathers 36.4% of the total media value of Real Madrid; while Lionel Messi shows an even larger share of around 40% of the total visibility of FC Barcelona in the media.

This result is presumably a good example of the “winner-take-all” effect, a phenomenon implying that predominant players attract most of the spotlights in the media. On the opposite extreme are some teams that attract less global attention and show significantly less dependency on their main player.

In the Premier League, Rooney accumulates 23.4% of his team (Manchester United) total attention. Regarding Chelsea FC, Eden Hazard is responsible for 16.4% of his club total. Generally, it seems that the dependency on the main player decreases along with the actual level of media exposure.

In Italy we find a contrasting situation. On one side, the captain and main player of AS Roma gathers 35.5% of the total attention generated by this club in the media. Such a huge figure is the result of exceptional relevance of Francesco Totti, whose retirement was already announced. On the other side, the case of Gonzalo Higuaín is different: the fact of playing in a club like Juventus, with plentiful of other superstar players, implies that he only represents 14.7% of the whole media value generated by his team.

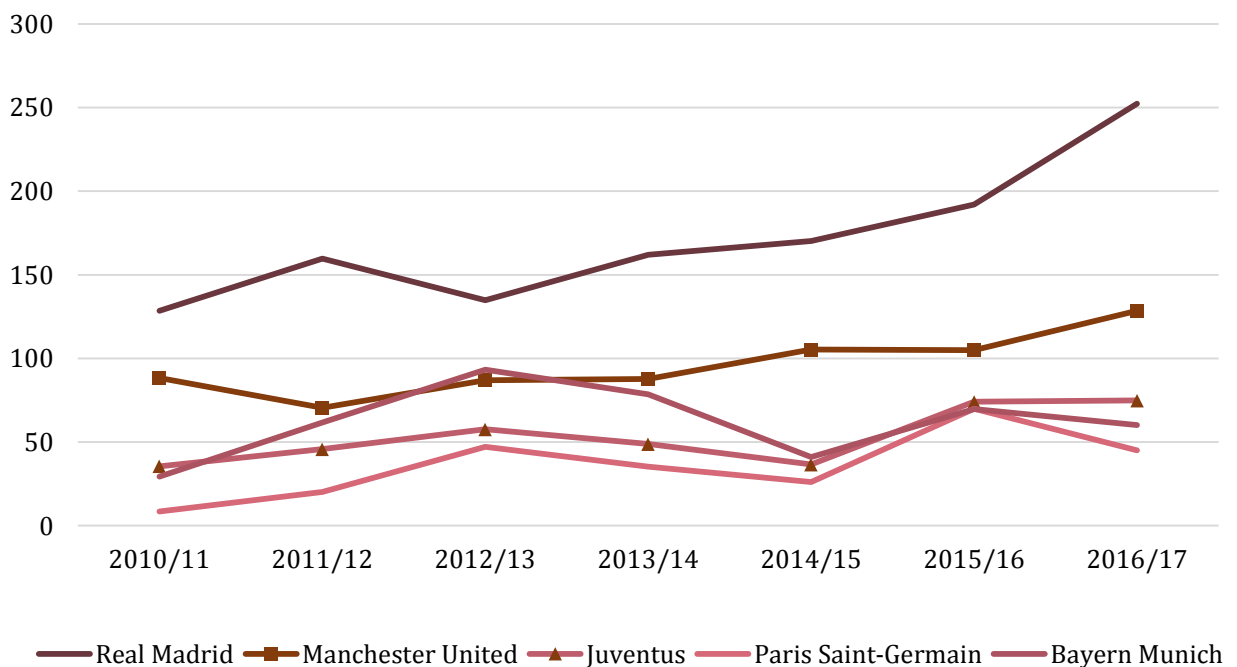
Finally, there are other teams whose media value does not depend very much on a single player. For instance, the polish attacker Robert Lewandowski accounts for only 13.6% of the total media visibility of Bayern Munich.

## 7. Media Value Evolution of Domestic Leaders

The following figure shows the evolution of the media value of the main club competing in each of the Big-5 domestic football leagues in Europe.

To develop this analysis, we used the MERIT media value ratings of seven seasons, which allowed us to compare them over time. The analysis covers the period 2010 to 2017, focusing on the evolution of the leading team in each domestic competition: Real Madrid, Manchester United, Juventus, Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munchen.

**Media Value Evolution - Main Team by League**  
Seasons 2010/11 to 2016/17



**Source:** MERIT social value – Data Collection

First, the figure illustrates the superiority of Real Madrid above all the other clubs. Moreover, the Spanish team shows an increasing trend throughout a period comprising seven seasons.

Of course, sport success is behind such a positive evolution over the years and in particular in season 2016/17, when Real Madrid won the Spanish La Liga and the UEFA Champions League.

Concerning the other teams, it seems that Manchester United also enjoys increasing superiority over time as compared to the other football clubs included into our graphical analysis.

The case of Paris Saint-Germain is an interesting one: the French champion experienced a noticeable peak in season 2012/13 and, since then, holds a permanent struggle with the Juventus and Bayern Munich to achieve the third position.

## 8. Media Value Evolution of the “Big-5” European Leagues

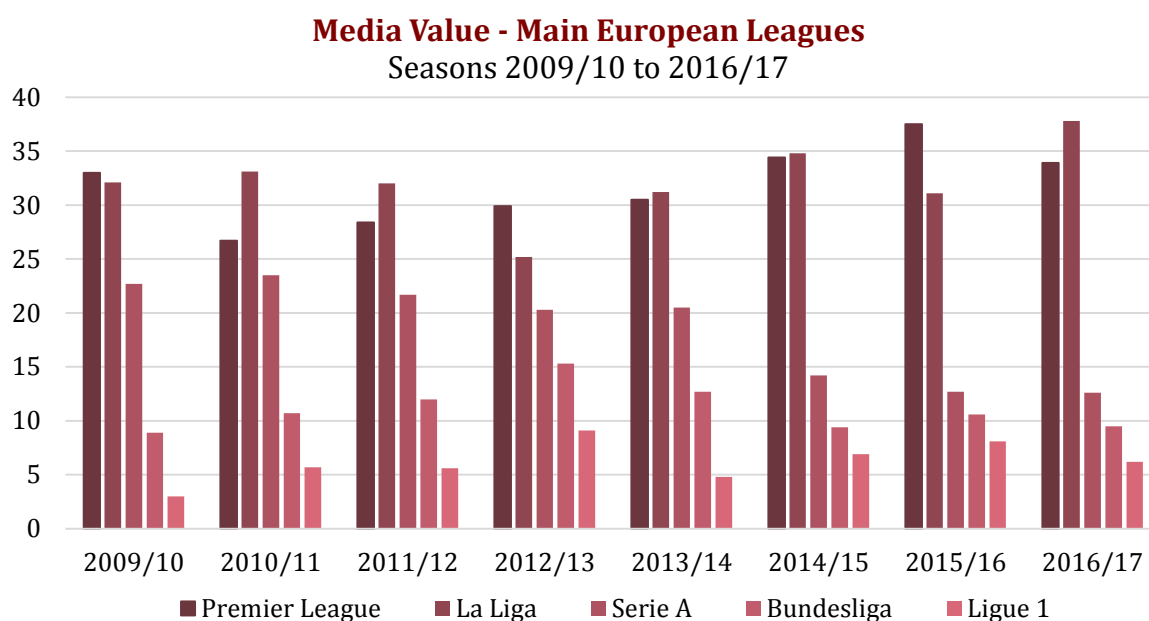
In this section we analyse the hierarchy of the “Big-5” European Football Leagues over time. To achieve this aim, we rely on media value records. The appraisal of the status of each domestic league, in terms of media visibility, is calculated by aggregating individual indexes of the most highly rated 400 players. (To verify the robustness of our results, we replicate the calculations for 300 and 500 players. All the three approaches actually delivered essentially similar outcomes).

The following table sums up our results by showing the relative share of media exposure (in percentage) of each domestic over the last seven seasons.

Leagues	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Premier League</b>	26.7	28.4	29.9	30.5	34.4	37.5	33.9
<b>La Liga</b>	33.1	32.0	25.2	31.2	34.8	31.1	37.8
<b>Serie A</b>	23.5	21.7	20.3	20.5	14.2	12.7	12.6
<b>Bundesliga</b>	10.7	12.0	15.3	12.7	9.4	10.6	9.5
<b>Ligue 1</b>	5.7	5.6	9.1	4.8	6.9	8.1	6.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: MERIT social value – Data Collection

There seems to be a tight battle between the Premier League and the Spanish La Liga to conquer the first place in the MERIT media value ranking. Both of these domestic football leagues gain a remarkable gap with respect to the other competitions. The following figure presents the same information in a visual way, illustrating changes in media leadership over the seasons.

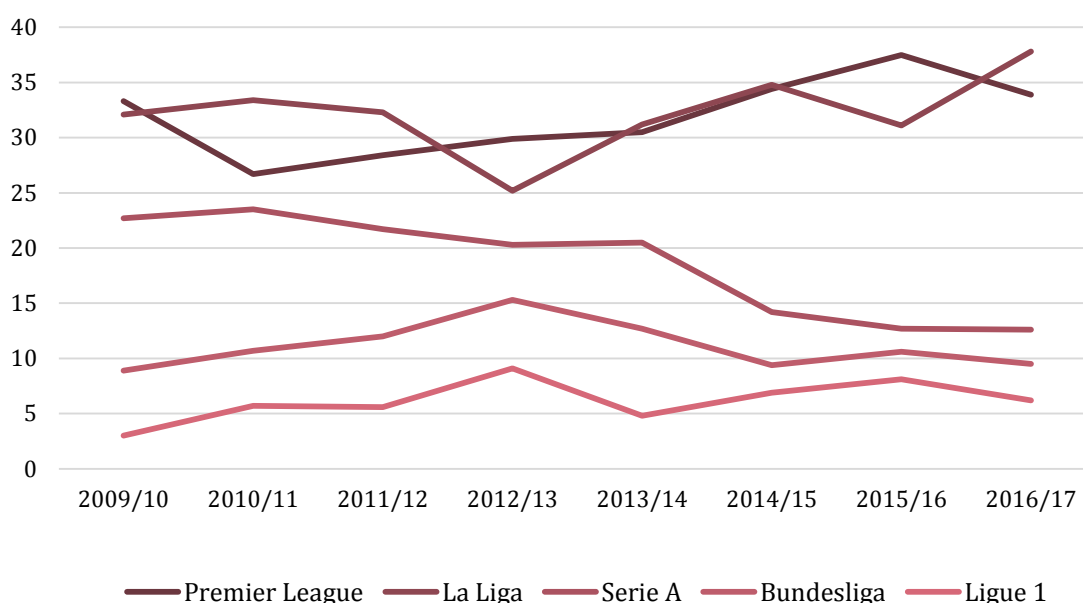


Source: MERIT social value – Data Collection

A feature that seems to occur in recent seasons is the widening gap, in terms of media value, between the group of the two leading competitions (the Premier and the Spanish leagues) and the other domestic tournaments. According to our results, the evidence does not support the view that the presumable lack of competitive sport balance affecting La Liga results in loss of interest on part of the media and the general public.

The following figure illustrates the evolution over eight seasons of the media value share amassed by each of the Big-5 European leagues with respect to the aggregated total of these five domestic competitions.

**Media Value Evolution- Big Five**  
Season 2009/10 to 2016/17



Source: MERIT social value – Data Collection

Some comments can be made from the examination of the evolution over time. Traditionally, the English Premier League has prevailed over the rest. Then, presumably assisted by the fact that the Spanish team won the European and World cups, La Liga overpassed in season 2012/13 the Premier League, climbing to the top position and starting since then a hard battle for leadership in the mass media.

The other leagues appear as victims of the supremacy exerted by the Spanish and English leagues in recent times. The Italian Serie A lost a remarkable level of media attention, perhaps due to the poor participation and sport achievements of Italian teams in the European competitions.

The German Bundesliga and the French Ligue 1 find themselves behind the other counterparts, as they are less able to attract media attention.



Once again, we are presumably observing here the implications of the “winner-take-all” phenomenon, as the leading competitions accumulate global visibility in the media in a greater extent that one would expect according to the leagues’ sporting quality and achievements.

### **Academic Staff**

#### **Pedro García-del-Barrio**

Academic Director - MERIT social value  
Senior Lecturer in Economics  
Universitat Internacional Catalunya  
pgarcia@uic.es | pedrogb@meritsocialvalue.com  
Tel. +34 93 2541800

### **Contact**

#### **Javier Viñeta Manero**

Partner - MERIT social value  
javier.vineta@meritsocialvalue.com

#### **Juan Carlos Ariso Salgado**

Partner - MERIT social value  
jcariso@meritsocialvalue.com

[www.meritsocialvalue.com](http://www.meritsocialvalue.com)