

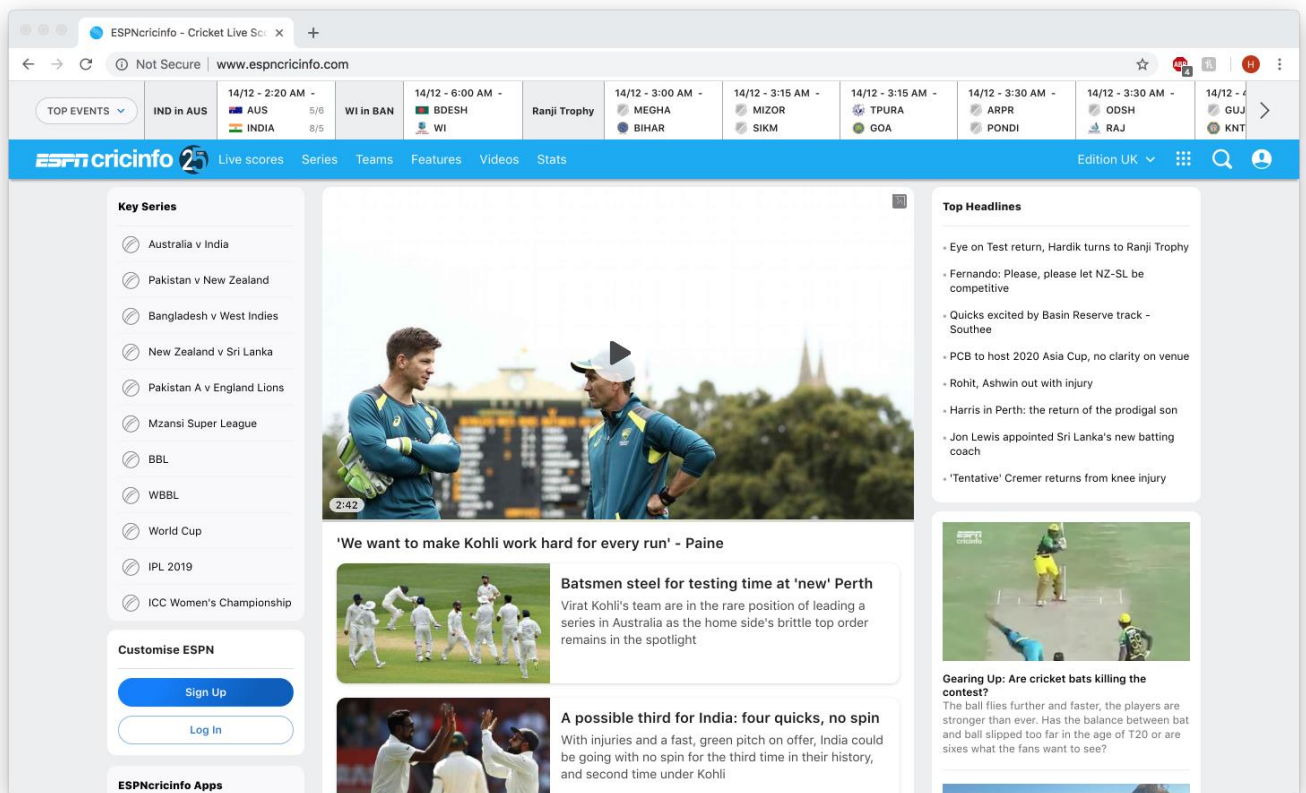
## **Multi-Platform Sports Journalism – AE1 – Website Case Study**

'ESPNcricinfo' is a website that specialises in providing content related to cricket. It was launched in 1993, and as its name suggests, is owned by sporting media giant, ESPN. As well as keeping its users up to date with cricketing news, the site also provides detailed statistics related to both teams and players. Match scores, fixtures and results are present on ESPNcricinfo along with interviews from past and present players. During a match, a ball by ball live running text feed is utilised by the site, ensuring fans are current with a game scenario.

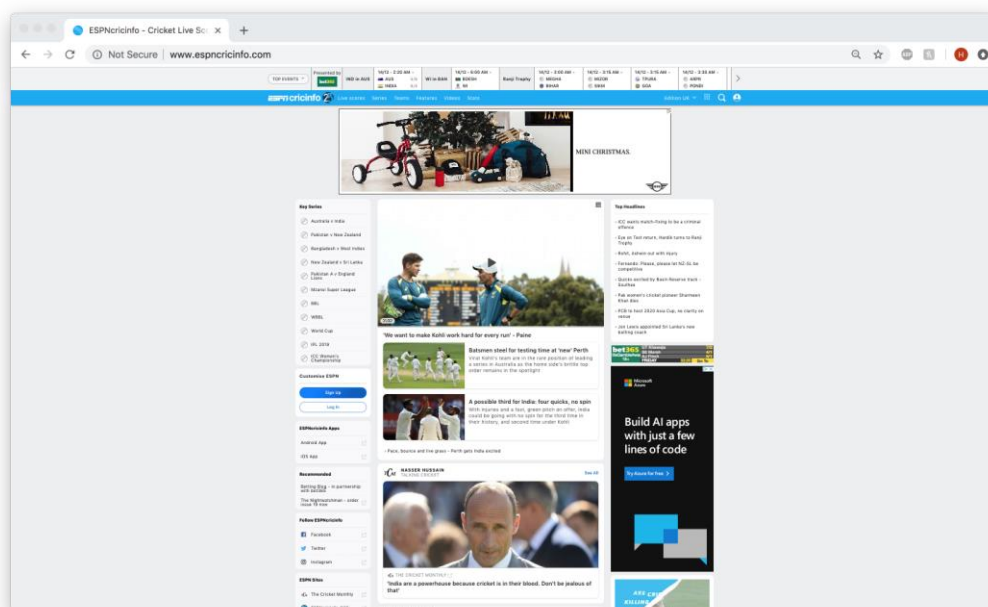
Due to ESPNcricinfo's dedication to content that revolves around cricket, its main target audience is someone who follows the sport and wants to keep up with news and matches. The website audience is 93 per cent male, with 66 per cent of those being qualified professionals or in senior/middle management, suggesting that ESPNcricinfo appeals to what is typically a more upper-class fan. This is reinforced by its media kit, which claims that 89 per cent of its user base is in the ABC1 demographic category, meaning they are successful and have high incomes. Cricket is a sport which is associated with a higher class of people, therefore the website data reflects this. As well as having a keen interest in the sport, it should be noted that 56 per cent of the site's users play sport regularly, showing a correlation between participation and the want of reading about cricket.

The website attracts one million unique users monthly in the UK and a further eight million around the world, demonstrating the popularity of the sport and need for the website. ESPNcricinfo claim that they own more than 50 per cent of the market share for cricket sites, with its nearest competitor only reaching five per cent. The number of hits the site receives increases during large cricketing events. For example, in the 2005 Ashes series, ESPNcricinfo was the fifth biggest website in the sports sector. In February 2010, when Sachin Tendulkar broke the record for the highest individual score by a batsman in a One Day International, ESPNcricinfo crashed. The site received 45 million page views in one day, with the match report becoming the websites most read piece of content. This displays that when in need of specialist cricket content, users will go to ESPNcricinfo.

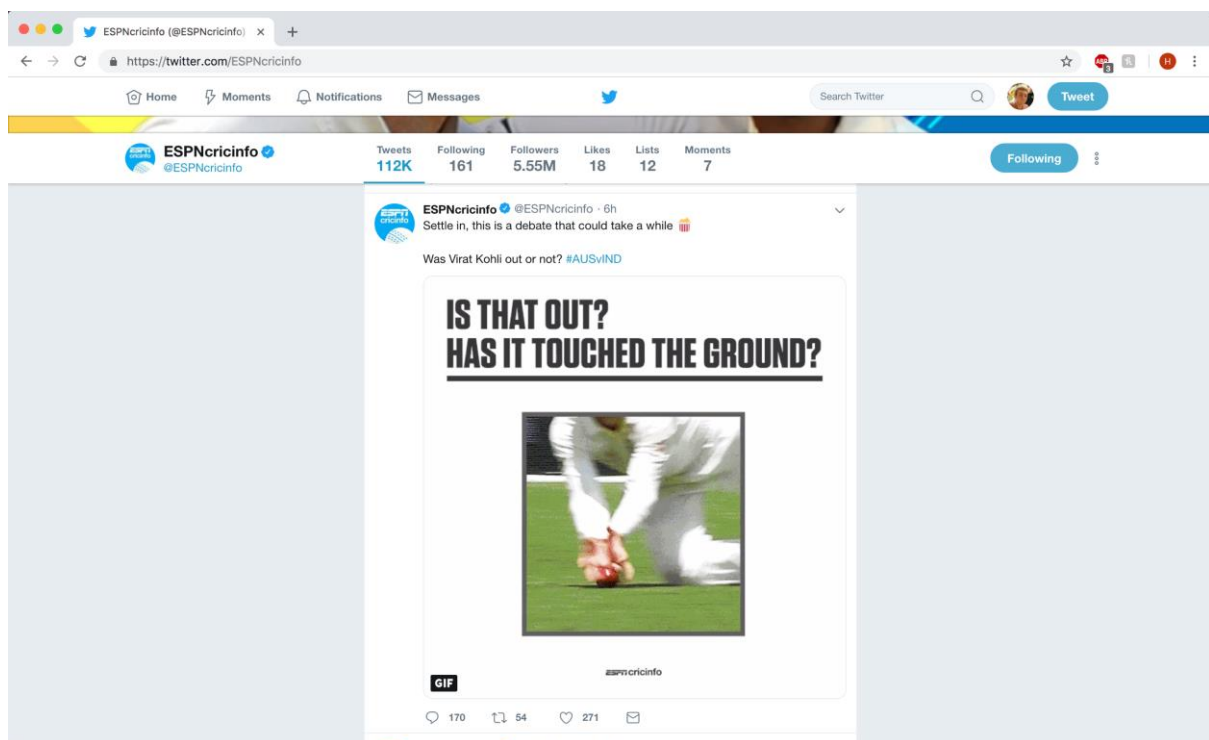
The homepage of ESPNcricinfo is simple, but very effective. Centred on the page is the main story, instantly dragging the reader's eye to current news in the sport. Other stories which have left the immediate spotlight are placed around the page much like a typical news site. A useful feature of the homepage is the top banner that displays fixtures and current scores, making the website attractive for cricket fans as they can read latest news about the sport whilst keeping up to date with live matches. The navigation bar near the top of the page allows users to easily traverse the page, clearly displaying simple page names. Towards the right of the navigation bar is a feature that is very unique and ESPNcricinfo does well to employ such a helpful addition. This is a location modifier, meaning that the edition of the website can be changed depending on the user's geographical location. This is incredibly useful for fans of specific cricketing nations to get the most relevant news for them. The homepage also includes an option to sign into an account. This allows users to customise their page including the feature to add favourite teams to keep up to date with more relevant information to them.



There is no form of paywall on the site which means that it is accessible to anyone. This is positive for ESPNcricinfo as new fans of the sport will be encouraged to use the website because everything they need is available for them from the outset. All content is free so users will not feel alienated. This does however mean that ESPNcricinfo needs to make income through other sources and they do this by advertisements. The website has adverts on all of its pages. Despite this, they are not invasive, therefore should not put off any potential visitors.



Interactivity and engagement is something that could be improved for ESPNCricinfo. There is no forum on the website, meaning that fans cannot post topics or questions to discuss issues with one another. The area in which interactivity is present is in the form of links to various social media platforms, with the most popular being Twitter and Facebook. ESPNCricinfo has five and a half million followers on Twitter and just over seven million likes on Facebook. This reflects the popularity of the sport and website and need for fans to engage with one another and the website. Most of the posts on social media are limited to being links to articles, reflecting how effective ESPNCricinfo's online presence is, but some do create for discussion, prompting users to debate with one another. Hall (cited in Bradshaw 2018, p.281) said that "in the age of the web, interactivity could be added to impartiality, objectivity and truth as a core value of journalism. It is that important." ESPNCricinfo's failure to implement interactive features could be holding the website back from becoming even bigger than it is.



Rogers (2017) states that "Reading from a computer screen is slower than reading from a paper. So if newspaper stories need to be short, online stories need to be even shorter...short paragraphs – just a sentence or two each – look less imposing on a web page." ESPNCricinfo does not follow this idea. Stories on the website are long and take time to read. Although this may discourage a casual sports fan from visiting the site, it does mean that dedicated cricket supporters will want to use ESPNCricinfo as it is detailed and written in an expert style. It is clear from reading several stories that the reporters employed by the site know what they are talking about.

The screenshot shows the ESPNcricinfo website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'TOP EVENTS' and 'bet365' logo. Below that, a header displays match details: 'SL 282' and 'NZ 311/2 (84 ov)'. The main article is titled 'Australia 326 and 4 for 132 (Khawaja 41\*, Shami 2-23) lead India (Kohli 123, Lyon 5-67) by 175 runs'. The article text describes Virat Kohli's performance and Nathan Lyon's five-wicket haul. A 'FIREBOX' section on the right features match coverage highlights with small images and text snippets.

ESPNcricinfo's mobile equivalent works well. It is suitably modified for the mobile platform, meaning that users can access the site and its content wherever they are. Whilst using the mobile version of the website, users are prompted to download the ESPNcricinfo app, showing a clear push by the site to entertain the cricket market while on the go. Much like the desktop version of the site, the app is free to use and does contain advertisements, adding to revenue streams.

The size of the ESPNcricinfo website is incomprehensible. The number of stories on the site is huge, with more than 30 being added over a week. The size of the site dramatically increases when match stats are brought into account. Scorecards for games as far back as the 1870s are available and these range from international matches to small, domestic games. The match stats are on top of individual player profiles, meaning that the ESPNcricinfo database of historic information is incredibly large.

In summary, ESPNcricinfo is an excellent website for cricketing fans. Its customisable location setter means that people from around the world can tailor content best for them. It is simple to use and allows visitors access wherever they are with the addition of a mobile site and app. Cricket fans will be able to see a vast array of data throughout history, showing it is targeted at fans of the sport. Improvements could be made to the interactivity of the site by implementing a forum or something to the same effect. This may not have been done already due to the size of ESPNcricinfo's audience and what would ultimately lead to the challenge of moderating many different forum threads.

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