

# + Fan connection pulse

## DECEMBER 2025

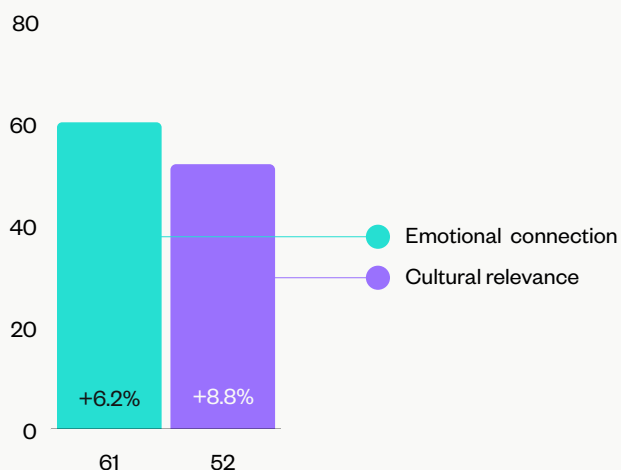
### Cultural momentum is increasingly hard to earn—and even harder to keep

For brand marketers activating in sports across Automotive, CPG, Financial Services, Footwear and Casual Dining, the data shows meaningful gains in relevance and emotional connection are becoming rare.

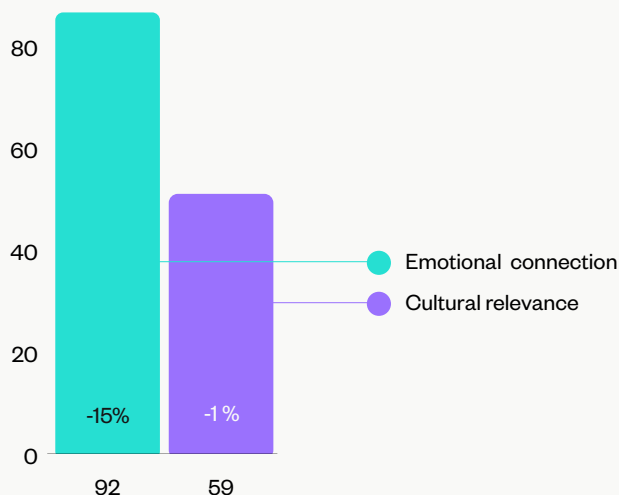
Financial Services is the only sector actively deepening its presence in sports culture over the past six months—driven by fan-first activations. Other categories, particularly CPG, have stagnated or declined. The takeaway is clear: brands must rethink how they show up in America's favorite pastime if they want to drive real ROI and remain relevant to today's passionate, evolving fanbase.

Emotional connection is slipping, and cultural relevance has plateaued, especially for CPG brands. While rising prices across the sector play a role, the deeper issue is creative stagnation. The bold, breakthrough campaigns that once defined sports marketing are noticeably absent, leaving fans with fewer reasons to care and connect.

#### + Financial services



#### + CPG



#### Breakout brand:



+19% Cultural relevance

Mastercard's multi-year MLB investment models how to build equity in a sport with an integrated marketing approach throughout the season, with apexes at key moments.

#### Methodology

Leveraging MikeWorldWide's proprietary AI-powered platform, PRISMA, which integrates consumer intelligence from BERA.ai, the Fan connection pulse evaluates brand performance and pinpoints the attributes that strengthen or weaken fan connection.

This new wave of the study analyzes data from July–October 2025, and benchmarks the same segment of sports fans against the prior wave to understand shifts in emotional connection and cultural relevance during a period defined by major sporting moments across college football, the NFL, MLB, and more.