



WEATHERVaiNE™
BY MMC

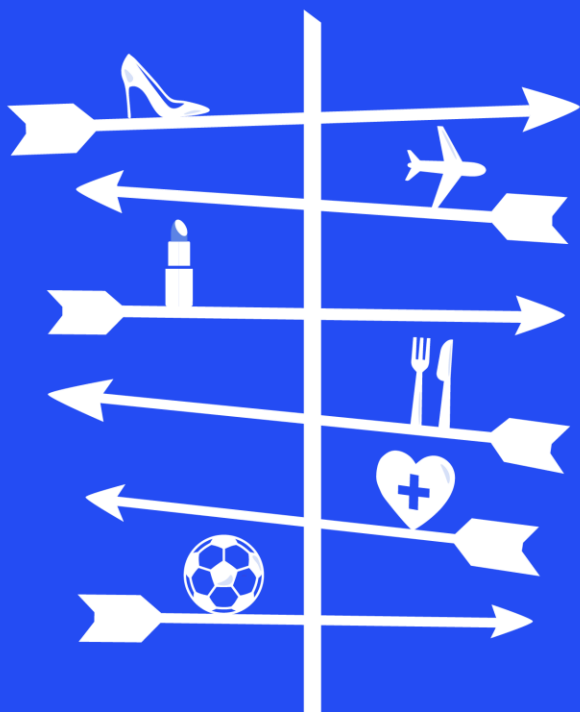
FAN-READY BLUEPRINT

A Practical Framework for Building Fandom and Community

Powered by Bluefish AI

INTRODUCTION

There was more than one winner of the FIFA World Cup. Spain's story is the least interesting.



Fandom has become one of the most powerful forces in culture. It creates shared language, fuels conversation and gives people a reason to show up, contribute and bring others with them. For brands, the opportunity is significant: build experiences that people do not simply engage with but choose to make part of their identity.

Spain won the FIFA World Cup according to the scoreboard. But the conversation winners were those with fan communities that gained attention, recruited new members and turned support into a shared cultural experience. The World Cup brings the world's biggest and most passionate fanbases into a single moment, each with its own traditions, symbols, stories and ways of rallying support. By examining which fanbases gained momentum and how they did it, brands can learn what it takes to cultivate participation, belonging and lasting cultural relevance.

This inaugural report introduces **WEATHERVaiNE**, MMC's proprietary AI-enabled cultural intelligence insights engine, powered by Bluefish AI. Built on MMC's decades of communications expertise, WEATHERVaiNE applies AI as a new research methodology to interpret the cultural conversations shaping consumer attention, identity, fandom and influence.

WEATHERVaiNE uses proprietary AI-enabled analysis to evaluate how large language models synthesize cultural signals across publicly available digital content, including news, search, social media, forums and other online discourse. It compares responses across defined moments in time to identify changes in visibility, sentiment, association and narrative momentum. MMC's cultural and communications expertise then translates those signals into clear implications for brands.

Every WEATHERVaiNE report will identify emerging trends, the shifts in behavior, expression and expectation, that are influencing how people connect with brands and one another. This report delivers two practical outcomes: a blueprint for building fandom, drawn from the World Cup's most compelling fan dynamics, and three emerging trends to inform brand tone, partnerships, content and action.

Welcome to the first reading from WEATHERVaiNE.

KEY FINDINGS:

A FAN-READY BLUEPRINT

Whether they intended to or not, the fandoms that translated engagement and participation to surging visibility and favorability did so by making a few key things possible:

1. Make belonging recognizable

Clear identity, shared signals and a point of view people can claim.

2. Make participation natural

Simple rituals, gathering spaces and shareable behaviors that turn spectators into contributors.

3. Make stories purposeful

An open invitation, emotional purpose and stories people want to pass on.

Together, these three principles encompass the eight elements of the full Fan-Ready Checklist.

THREE TRENDS emerged from analyzing fan content representing shifts in consumer priorities that brands can apply to understand and cultivate the fandoms people want to be a part of.

RIVALRY → SOLIDARITY

Create connections that widen the circle.

GRACEFUL → GOOBER

Make room for personality, play and joyful imperfection.

NARRATIVE → LORE

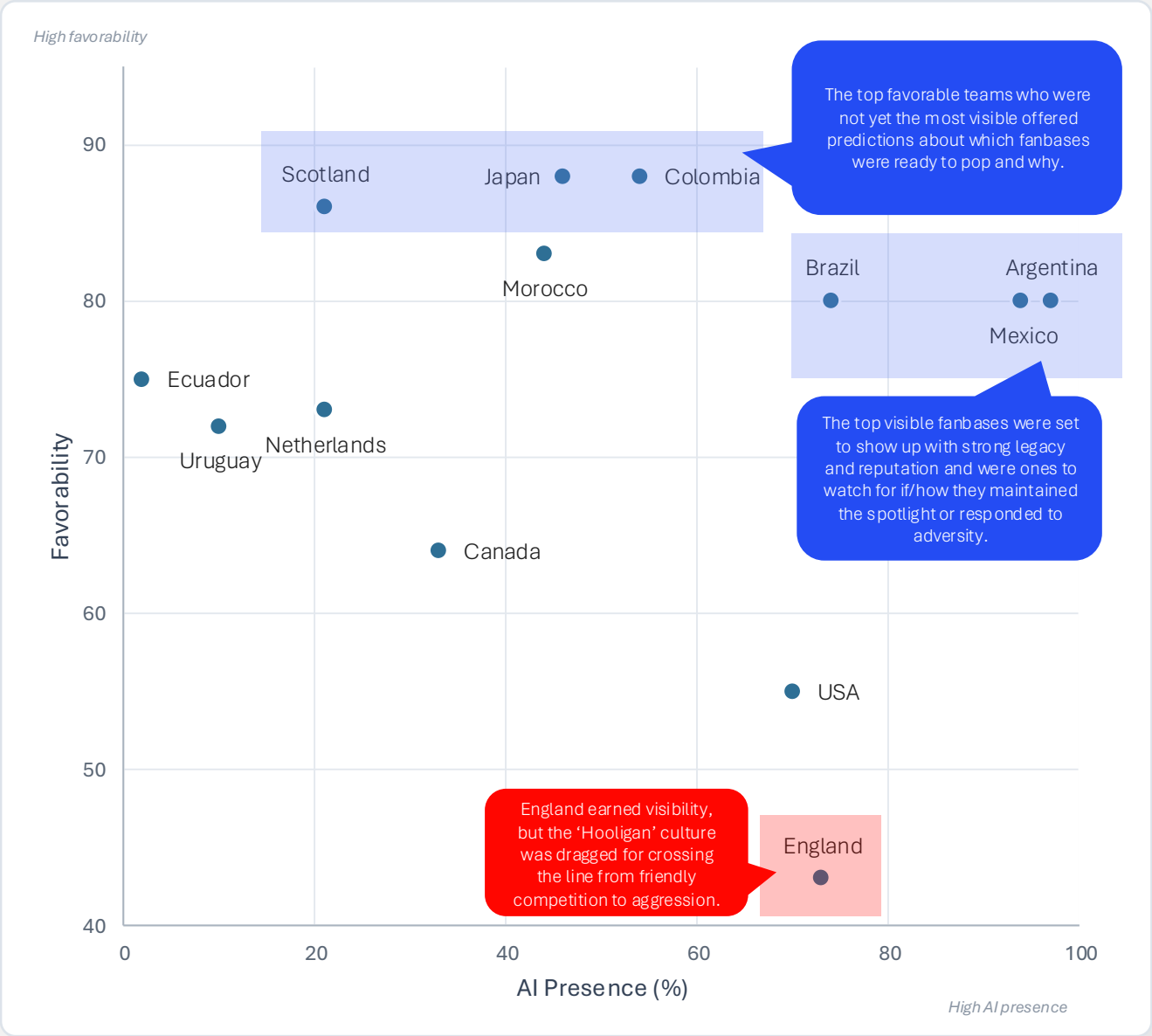
Give communities stories they can repeat, remix and carry forward.

The brands best positioned to build fandom will pair clear invitations to participate with a cultural instinct for how people want to connect, express themselves and belong right now.

THE BIG STORY: FIFA FANDOM MASTERCLASS

HOW IT STARTED EARLY PREDICTIONS

We plotted the FIFA World Cup teams whose fanbases had the top-10 highest visibility and top-10 highest favorability in AI responses before anyone set foot on the field. The analysis reveals signals about WHICH fanbase would pop. And more importantly, WHY.



FANDOM ATTRIBUTES REVEALED SHARED THEMES

LLM narratives around which team has the best fanbases revealed that fanbases curated unique shared identities. Together, they teach us about how the best fanbases make themselves tick:

- Aligned attitudes/reputation
- Common rituals
- Intentional connection and recruitment devices (online and offline)
- Visual and sonic “badges”
- Names or labels to identify and unify the group

But surely Japan wasn't going to roll-up their sleeves halfway across the world?

Could friendliness and humor get the Scots very far?

  Lovable Heels  Generational Recruiting  “Boca Juniors” Youth Group  Social Meme Culture  Home Watch Parties	  Prideful Loyalists  Massive “Tifos” (Banners)  Carnival-like Atmosphere  “La Fiera” Label  Travel in Packs	  Reliable Sparkplugs  “Seleção Faithful” Label  Carnival Atmosphere  Coordinated Online Engagement  Iconic Green & Gold	  Joyful Devotees  Deep-Rooted Love of Sport  Extensive Song & Dance  Welcoming Atmosphere  “Sea of Yellow”	  Gracious Collectivists  Post-Game Cleanup Ritual  Cosplay  Coordinated Cheers  Family Friendly	  Friendly Jesters  Bagpipe Sonic Cue  Kilts & Tartan Patterns  Tartan Army Label  Gather in Public Spaces
--	---	---	--	---	---

WELL, AS IT TURNED OUT

SCOTLAND & BOSTON FELL IN LOVE

Gov. Healey signs traffic
cone gifted by Scotland 🇸🇪

JAPAN PACKED GARBAGE BAGS

VIKINGS ROWED... EVERYWHERE

HOW IT WENT

FANDOMS SENDING STRONG SIGNALS ROSE

The lesser visible but highly favorable fandoms leaned into the signals that rallied their ranks and operated inclusively, bringing new fans into the fold. The result? They not only further increased favorability but stole share from the top visible fandoms.

		Δ AI Presence	Δ AI Favorability	What Happened?
THE CORE 6 TO WATCH	Scotland	+49pp +7 rank	+6 score +1 rank	Japan and Scotland leaned into their reputation and rituals, bringing the masses with them.
	Japan	+10pp +2 rank	+4 score +/- 0 rank	
	Argentina	-5pp +/- 0 rank	-11 score -8 rank	The Latin American nations defended fan love but lacked consistency and messages/rituals outside of the game others could join.
	Mexico	-10pp +/- 0 rank	-1 score -2 rank	
	Colombia	-11pp -3 rank	+/- 0 score -2 rank	
	Brazil	-15pp -1 rank	+2 score -3 rank	
THE DARK HORSES	Norway	+22pp +7 rank	+30 score +19 rank	Unexpected surges from less known and less favorable fanbases resulted from inclusive fanfare: visual, physical and sonic celebrations with distinctive flare in public spaces that translated to online and IRL virality.
	Netherlands	+14pp +2 rank	+11 score +3 rank	
	Ecuador	+11 pp +25 rank	+3 score -2 rank	

"Which FIFA World Cup teams have the best/worst fans?" LLM response comparison between 2026 date ranges 5/4– 6/11 (2,870 responses) and 7/6 – 7/20 (929 responses)



FINAL FAN-READY CHECKLIST

Brands who treat their audiences like fans will make the kind of connections that make their brand a part of culture. Before your brand's next move toward community or fandom, run the checklist.

If your fans cannot name themselves, recognize each other, make noise together, generate their own content, bring in new members, feel something real, or welcome outsiders, there is work to do.



A Name to Claim

Do your constituencies have a name, or shorthand that makes them feel like part of something collective?



A Place to Gather

Where do your fans gather, online or IRL? What happens when they get there? How can you add value?



A Signal to Flare

Do you have symbols, colors, visual rituals or artifacts that people can wear, carry, share or display with pride?



A Sound to Share

What does your brand sound like when people participate? Can you leverage distinguishing sonic cues?



A Reason to Create

Have you created moments, behaviors, or formats people naturally want to film and share?



A Plan to Recruit

Are mechanisms in place to bring in and nurture new brand fans? How can you build/support them?



A Feeling to Defend

What's the unique emotion and story that ties together fans of your brand? How can you help preserve/foster it?



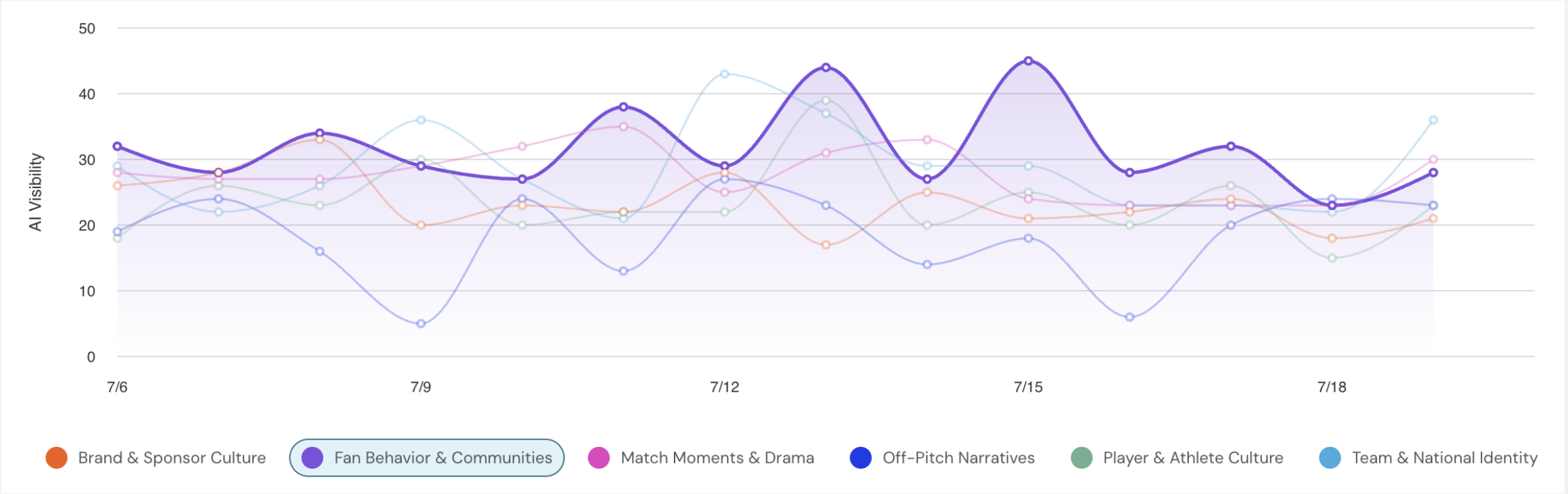
A Reputation that Travels

Do common attitudes & behaviors of your brand fans register? How can you help crystalize while remaining inclusive?

THE FIFA WEATHERVAINNE: 3 TRENDS (OR CULTURAL WINDS)

FIFA FANDOMS IN MOTION

We dug deeper into the winning content and narratives rising across thousands of LLM responses during the last two weeks of the World Cup. Stories about fan behavior and communities consistently earned the most visibility.



Analysis of 2,484 LLM responses to between 7/6/2026 – 7/20/2026





CONTENT THEMES

Instagram was the top-cited and most influential source in LLM responses about fan community and behavior during the last two weeks of the World Cup. Analyzing then 300+ cited posts, we surfaced three content themes driving the narrative.



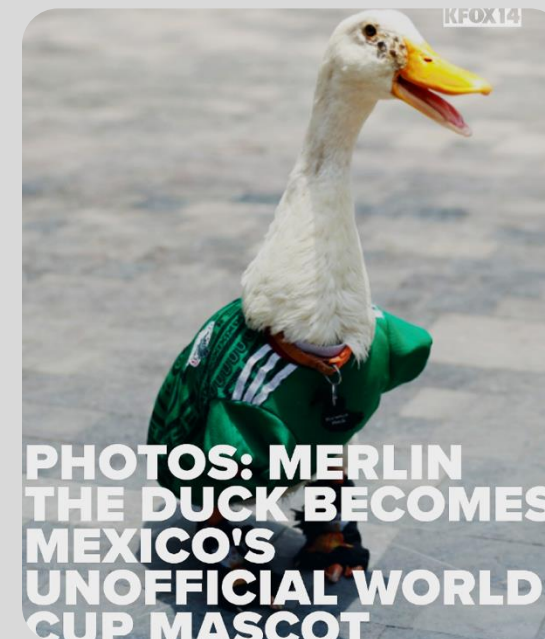
Endearing Collisions

Heartfelt stories ranging from hilarious to emotional show fans taking delight in discovery, sharing and participating in other fan cultures.



Playful Absurdism

Fans made funny, sharable memes out of oddities in physical and digital spaces, like traffic cones taking over statues and impossible AI-generated pitch scenarios.



Creative Storytelling

Fans, whether knowingly or not, tapped into the “hero’s journey” and spun all sorts of tales about team history, new traditions and sideshow attractions.

THE THEMES INTERSECTED TO CREATE SOME OF THE TOP CITED AND INFLUENTIAL CONTENT



Tough cops are no match for fans' cultural antics

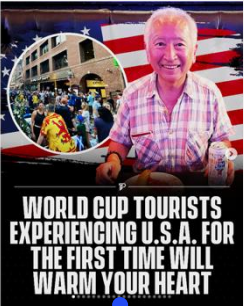


A duck gains unexpected fame as a new mascot for Mexico

Fans spin tall tales with over-the-top AI memes



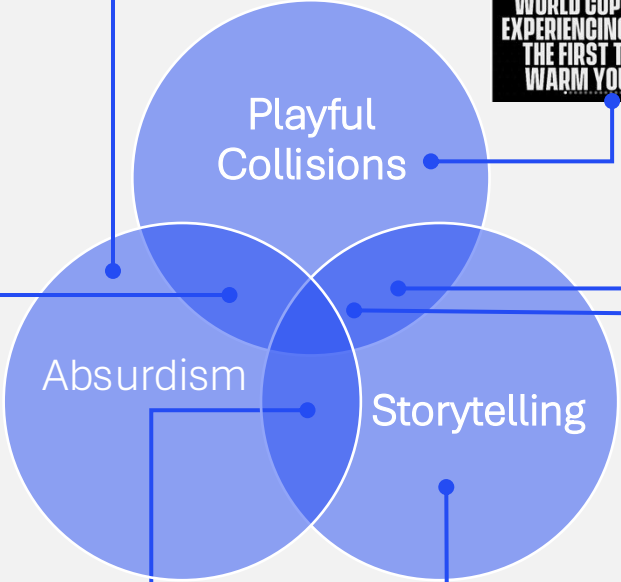
Authentic, unfiltered reactions to American culture - from BBQ to yellow school buses



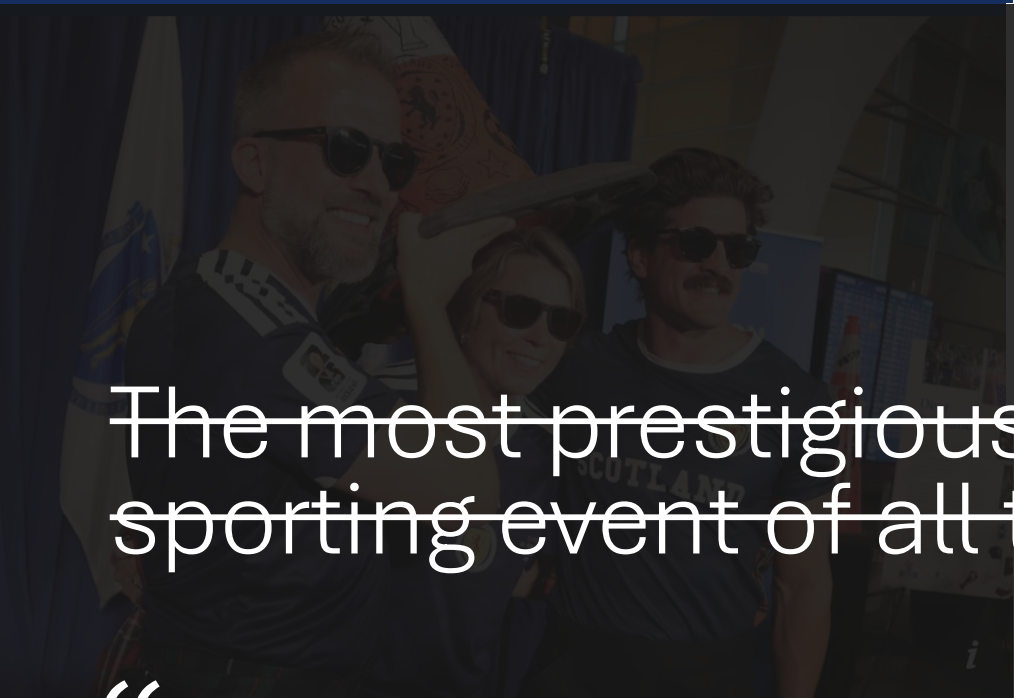
The "FIFA Fifteen" spins a story using AI



The Viking row supercedes historical accuracy



**MMC'S HUMAN INTELLIGENCE LAYER
DISTILLED WHAT THESE THEMES
SAY ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF CULTURE**

A photograph of three people at a sporting event. A man on the left wears sunglasses and a dark shirt. A woman in the middle also wears sunglasses and a dark shirt. A man on the right wears sunglasses and a dark shirt. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a stadium or arena setting.

~~The most prestigious
sporting event of all time~~

“**THE GREAT
AMERICAN SLEEPOVER**”

They came for the soccer. They fell in love with
ranch dressing

WEATHERVaiNE™

JUN 27, 2026

By  Amy Gunia

Spain fan asked to swap jerseys with
Cabo Verde fan at the World Cup. Pure
wholesomeness ensued.

“I love when we human right.”



BY ANNIE RENEAU

JUN 20, 2026



TREND 1**FROM RIVALRY TO SOLIDARITY**

The sideshow became the *main event*.

WHAT WE SAW

The World Cup promised fierce competition. But many of its most magnetic moments happened beyond the matches, when visiting fandoms, host cities and rival supporters joined each others' rituals.

- [Scotland and Boston began a mutual love affair.](#)
- [Japanese supporters' cleanup ritual became a shared activity.](#)
- Everyday encounters created new fans *without a ball being kicked*.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRAND COMMUNICATORS (YOU)

Don't simply sponsor the spectacle or jump on rivalries. Create ways for people to participate in one another's experience and build delightful connections.

**INSIGHT**

The moments that travel furthest are often the ones that dissolve the boundary between host and guest, fan and newcomer, or “us” and “them.”

“GOOBER”

defined as... a silly goose, or
cringe on purpose

HAALAND CAME FOR SOCCER.
HE LEFT WITH A RACCOON
AND TWO SQUIRRELS.

Yes, that's Erling Haaland
with a taxidermy raccoon
holding a bottle of booze

TREND 2**FROM GRACEFUL TO GOOBER**

Personality, *not polish*, won the feed.

WHAT WE SAW

The defining content wasn't a perfectly staged portrait of global celebrity. It was [Haaland carrying home a taxidermied raccoon](#), [Japanese fans gleefully discovering American excess](#) and supporters reacting with [childlike abandon](#). These moments succeeded because they were:

- Specific rather than universally polished
- Unselfconscious rather than aspirational
- Odd enough to be remembered
- Human enough to be shared

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRAND COMMUNICATORS (YOU)

Stop sanding away your brand's or brand partners' personality.

**INSIGHT**

Distinctiveness comes from letting people, creators and communities behave like themselves—even when the result is awkward, niche or “cringe on purpose.”

How Norway's 'Viking Row' was made
and then took over the World Cup

Daily Telegraph

It's never coming home?
England reel from another
monumental choke

MYTHOLOGY

created in real time

History optional

MERLIN THE DUCK BECOMES WORLD CUP MASCOT



TREND 3**FROM NARRATIVE TO LORE**

People remember the story, not the message house.

WHAT WE SAW

The tournament's most durable moments quickly became lore:

- The Scots took over Boston
- Japanese supporters left every place better than they found it
- Haaland went home with a raccoon
- England's familiar mythology of heartbreak returned
- Argentina's history, heroes and rituals shaped every new chapter

Lore makes a community feel as though it has a shared past. It gives people material they can reinterpret, repeat and add to.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRAND COMMUNICATORS (YOU)

Treat brand history, audience rituals and unexpected moments as raw material, not trivia.

**INSIGHT**

Established brands can uncover lore. New brands can create the conditions for it. In either case, the community helps decide which stories endure.

SO, WHAT SHOULD A BRAND DO WITH THIS?

BUILD FOR THE STORY PEOPLE WILL RETELL

Engineer cultural collisions.



Bring groups together around an activity they can do, not merely content they can watch.

Ask: Where can audiences participate in one another's rituals?

Give personality room to misbehave.



Choose distinctive people and behaviors over immaculate, interchangeable execution.

Ask: What are we editing out of our campaigns because it feels too weird, specific or unpolished?

Seed and capture lore.



Mine company history, recognize community rituals and document emerging stories while they are still taking shape.

Ask: What will people still be retelling after the campaign is gone?

ABOUT WEATHERVAINNE

A NEW WAY TO READ CULTURE BEFORE IT BECOMES CONSENSUS.

WEATHERVaiNE is MMC's proprietary AI-enabled cultural intelligence insights engine, powered by Bluefish AI. It applies AI as a new research methodology, analyzing how large language models interpret the conversations unfolding across news, search, social media, forums and other shared digital spaces.

By comparing those interpretations over time, WEATHERVaiNE helps identify shifts in visibility, sentiment, association and narrative momentum. MMC's cultural and communications experts then translate those signals into practical implications for brands: what is changing, why it matters and how to respond.

METHODOLOGY

1. Identify Cultural Tentpoles and Hypotheses

MMC strategists use earned, social and cultural listening to identify moments that concentrate attention and bring fragmented audiences into a shared conversation. Based on this listening, MMC strategists select a tentpole with desired reach and scale, then develop hypotheses about how the conversation and cultural action may unfold.

2. Build and Test the Listening Framework

We then translate those theories into multiple themed Bluefish dashboards that pose and track LLM questions and responses; each designed to examine the moment from a different angle and ask thousands of related questions daily. Early findings help us determine which topics, questions and perspectives warrant persistent tracking once the cultural tentpole event is underway.

3. Listen Persistently at Scale

Throughout the cultural tentpole, we repeatedly ask the same core questions using different permutations, prompts and “fan-outs” across the LLMs most responsive to recent information. This produces tens of thousands, and sometimes hundreds of thousands, of answers each day, allowing us to identify patterns that persist across models, phrasings and time.

4. Detect the Most Relevant Patterns

We analyze recurring answers across a broad range of topics to understand what is rising, resonating, winning or losing, and why. While this report focuses on fan bases, the system captures a much wider field of cultural conversation, from which we identify the signals most relevant to marketing and communications leaders.

5. Apply AI-Supported Human Analysis

MMC strategists use Omni AI and their strategic and cultural expertise to interpret the patterns, investigate underlying drivers and translate the findings into implications for brands.

6. Validate and Advance

We compare the findings against earned, social and cultural listening data to pressure-test the conclusions, validate emerging signals and sharpen the strategic recommendations.

HOW BRANDS CAN ENGAGE

Follow the Winds

MMC will conduct ongoing cultural listening and publish **three to four WEATHERVaiNE reports each year**, identifying emerging trends and what they mean for brands, communicators and communities.

Make it your own

Brands can also engage MMC for **custom WEATHERVaiNE work** designed around their specific business, marketing and communications objectives. These engagements connect broader cultural shifts to the audiences, categories, reputation questions and growth opportunities that matter most to your business.

To learn more or explore a custom engagement, contact MMC.

Rachel Heringer
Group SVP, Marketing, MMC
Rachel.heringer@omc.com

THANK YOU