

SPONSORUNITED

NHL MARKETING PARTNERSHIPS REPORT 2022-23



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ABOUT SPONSORUNITED

Launched in 2018, SponsorUnited is the leading global sports and entertainment intelligence platform, delivering real-time trends and on-demand research that provide invaluable insights.

With over 10M data points, 1.1M deals, and 250K brands across sports, entertainment, media, and talent, our SaaS database enables brands, agencies, and rights holders to partner more effectively. By connecting the entire sponsorship ecosystem through the most comprehensive data available anywhere, SponsorUnited is fueling smarter partnerships.

SponsorUnited debuted at No. 145 on the 2022 Inc. 5000 list – the most prestigious ranking of the fastest-growing private companies in America.



INTRODUCTION

Professional hockey is having a moment, as evidenced by its record-breaking 2022-2023 season.

NHL team sponsorship revenue rose 21% over last year totaling \$1.28B, outpacing growth in all other major pro sports leagues, including the NFL. This dazzling jump was fueled by a record 70 sponsors this season— including new global-level sponsors, which numbered 11 this season compared to just five brands four years ago.

Viewership is also climbing. ABC and ESPN combined showed 50 NHL games this season, 22 more than last, averaging 629K viewers— a 6% increase over last year (excluding limited windows where the NHL competed with NFL broadcasts). ABC alone averaged around one million viewers for this season's games, up 19% versus the 2021-2022 season. The first round of the NHL playoffs was the most watched of all time, up 18% over last year through the first 14 games.

In another first, the NHL unveiled jersey patch sponsorships this year, with just 13 of the league's 32 teams having inked deals so far— presenting a prime opportunity for brands to buy into this high-profile asset. Meanwhile, the league is strategically overhauling its entire sponsorship model, creating multifaceted partnerships that showcase social causes and embrace new categories and assets— namely heavy equipment and industrial power (Caterpillar) and NFTs (Sweet)— driving ROI and elevating the fan experience.

But the NHL's debut of digitally enhanced dashboards (DEDs) marked arguably the most exciting introduction not only within the league, but across all professional sports this season. Seven years in the making, DEDs represent the next frontier in NHL advertising, enabling the digital replacement of camera-visible ads within local, national and international NHL game broadcasts. While the Automotive sector leads in DED exposure so far, other categories— including Sports Betting & Fantasy, whose NHL sponsorships surged a staggering 185% this season— are quickly piling on. In years to come, every broadcast of every game could feature completely different ads on the boards worldwide— a transformative technology poised to change the sponsorship game within the league and beyond, as marketers across the entire professional sports sponsorship spectrum embrace its incredible potential.

For all these reasons and more, we're excited to present the NHL Marketing Partnerships Report 2022-2023. Authored jointly by SponsorUnited's Marketing Research & Insights, Analytics and Marketing teams, it delivers an in-depth analysis of more than 2,300 brands, 360 assets, and over 44,000 social posts between Aug 23, 2022, and May 16, 2023.

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

CHASE

MADISON

NHL MARKETING
PARTNERSHIPS
REPORT 2022-23

SPONSORUNITED

EMPEROR'S UPGRADE



EMPEROR'S UPGRADE



CAESARS

SPORTSBOOK

EMPEROR'S UPGRADE



CAESARS

SPORTSBOOK

EMPEROR'S UPGRADE

KEY FINDINGS

KEY FINDINGS

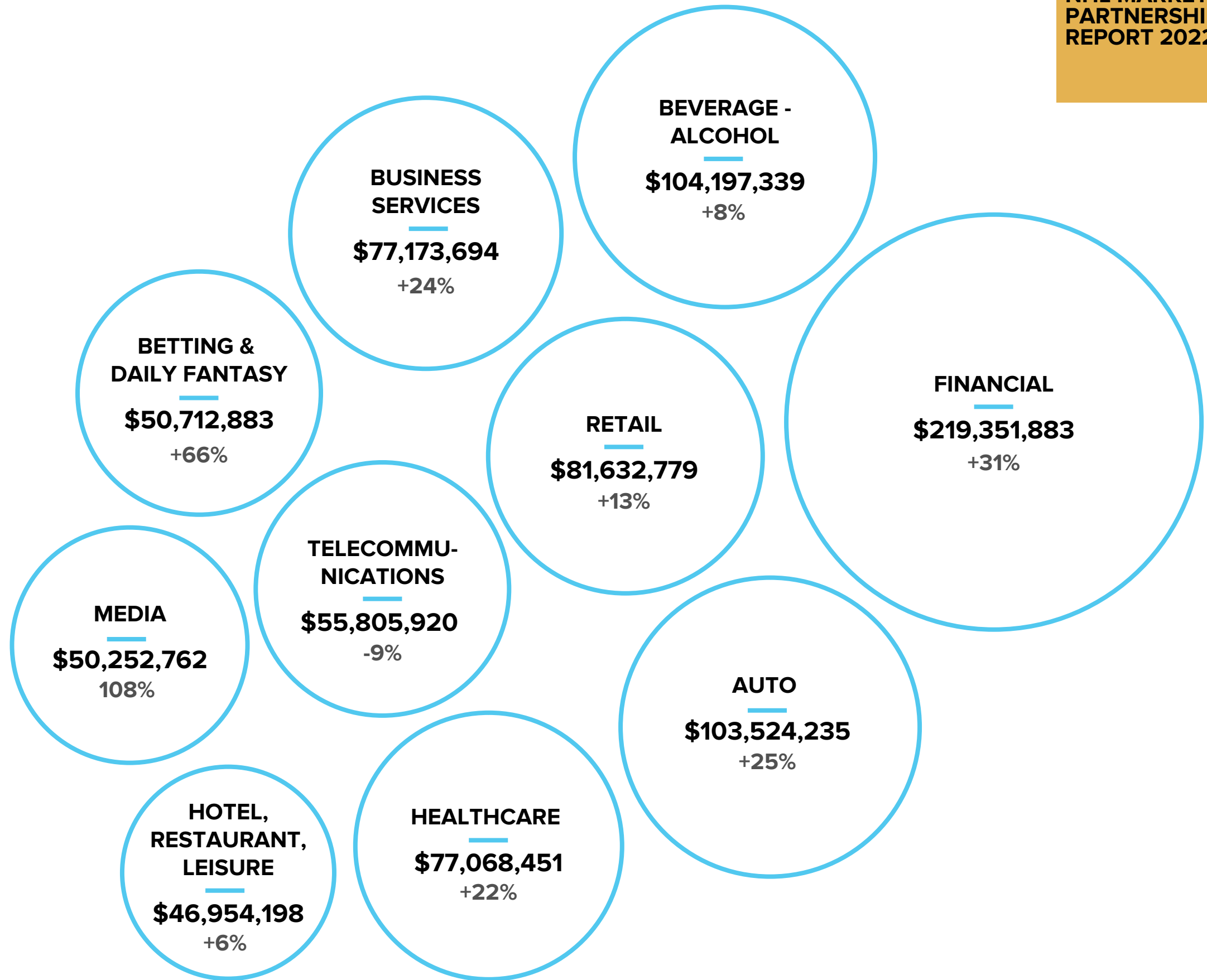
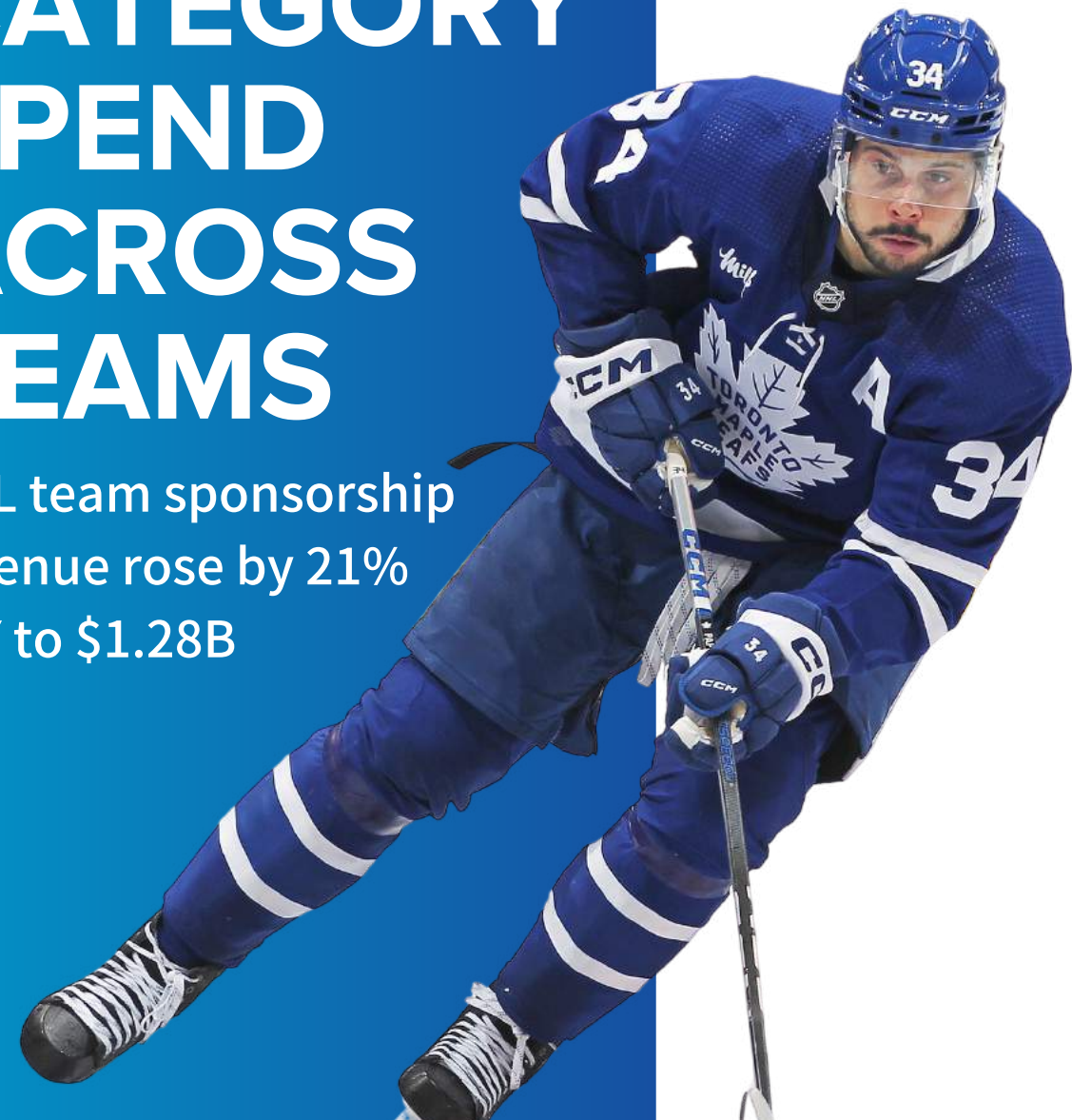
- 1** NHL team sponsorship revenue rose by 21% YoY to \$1.28B, outpacing growth in all other major pro sports leagues, including the NFL (14%). This impressive surge mirrors a record 70 sponsors for the 2022-23 season. Team sponsorship revenue in the Media sector skyrocketed a whopping 108%, followed by Sports Betting & Fantasy and Financial with 66% and 34% growth, respectively, while Auto and Business Services both rose 25%.
- 2** The four teams that made the NHL Conference Finals— the Carolina Hurricanes, Florida Panthers, Dallas Stars, and Las Vegas Knights— grew their sponsorships by an average 12 deals in the past year, compared to the league's average growth rate of 2.5 sponsorships. The final four teams average 125 sponsorships combined, 21% more than the average NHL sponsorship tally.
- 3** Betting & Daily Fantasy sponsorships surged a remarkable 185% since 2019, as the category embraces new virtual signage to enhance in-game sportsbook ads. A staggering 79% of Betting and DFS deals now include virtual signage, including DED ads— nearly 2.5x the league average of 33%.
- 4** NHL has strategically honed its sponsorship model, securing more meaningful partnerships with select brands and introducing unique categories like heavy equipment (Caterpillar) and NFTs (Sweet). Against this backdrop, the league saw a slew of innovative brand activations. Helmet sticker partnerships, a popular asset for social causes, rose 18% since their 2021 debut, with 46 brands emblazoned on league helmets. Meanwhile, brands with Community and Cause campaigns increased 43% since the 2020 season, as 335 brands, led by the Healthcare (15%) and Financial (13%) industries, embraced these initiatives.
- 5** Digitally enhanced dashboards (DEDs) are revolutionizing the NHL sponsorship landscape, with over 700 brands buying digital dasher ads this season— driving new business, enhancing TV visibility, and elevating creative messaging within the league, as they replace traditional signage on arena rink boards.
- 6** Brands are redefining their benchmarks for NHL partnership success, emphasizing the growing importance of social media engagement and impressions. This shift reflects the burgeoning value placed on real-time performance metrics and end-of-season evaluations, underscoring the role of data-driven insights in shaping the future of NHL sponsorships.

SPONSORSHIP REVENUE



CATEGORY SPEND ACROSS TEAMS

NHL team sponsorship revenue rose by 21% YoY to \$1.28B





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PARTNERSHIPS
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CASE STUDIES



Anaheim Ducks Score on Social

The team harnessed social media to amplify its partnerships, growing its followers by 14% and cracking the top five fastest growing NHL clubs on social in the process



The team partnered with the Orange County Health Agency this season, which leveraged players' visibility with helmet stickers promoting the OC Navigator website, a mental health resource for county residents. A "Mental Health Mondays" campaign supplemented this effort, using the Ducks' robust social media following to promote mental health awareness and resources.



Real estate company, Opendoor, capitalized on its category exclusivity, integrating its branding directly onto the ice. To boost brand recognition, Opendoor also generated social media content featuring the players' pre-game entrances, creating a dynamic touchpoint for fan engagement.



Arrowhead Water renewed its partnership with the Ducks, reinforcing its commitment to sustainability with assets including signage, digital promotion, social media, and community events. The brand also sponsored the team's Green Night in April, part of a longstanding, league-wide eco-initiative to inspire league communities and partners to lower emissions, conserve water, reduce waste and more.



Coca-Cola resumed its role as the Ducks' exclusive soda partner, bringing its products back to the Honda Center for the first time since 2005 with a varied blend of pouring rights, activations, and social media content, as well as digital signage elements throughout the arena.



In a new partnership this season, Just For Men utilized TV-visible signage and scoreboard features to increase exposure for the brand, and also activated product sampling to reach its target audience within the Ducks' fanbase.



Fever Tree seized the opportunity to introduce its premium mixers to the team's fans this season, integrating in-venue activations and offering drink specials to elevate the beverage experience for fans while boosting brand recognition.



Red Wings' Cross-Property Marketing Strategy

Pioneering new wave sponsorship deals through cross-property exposure, increased event activation, community impact, and social engagement



MAXIMIZING BRAND EXPOSURE AND FAN ENGAGEMENT

As the digital landscape evolves, sports teams are challenged to maximize brand exposure, cultivate fan engagement, and deliver partner value. The Detroit Red Wings took a unique approach to harness their brand, deepen their connection with fans, and promote partner brands effectively.

CROSS-PROPERTY CAMPAIGNS

The Red Wings implemented an innovative cross-property strategy with the Detroit Tigers, including Tigers-inspired warm-up jerseys at a Red Wings game and a Hockeytown-inspired home run celebration throughout the Tigers baseball season. In addition to creating city-wide buzz, this strategy also promoted Meijer's helmet sticker sponsorship and Warrior's equipment partnership, effectively amplifying both Red Wings partnerships.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Community-centric initiatives have emerged as a central pillar in the Red Wings' sponsorship framework, marking a surge of 15% in deal incorporations. The team has intertwined its Giving Goals program with Meijer's endeavor to combat hunger, exemplifying synergy in corporate social responsibility. In addition, the Red Wings have the Game Changers campaign presented by Comerica Bank: a tribute to community contributors that reflects shared values between the Red Wings, Tigers, and Comerica Bank, fortifying the authenticity and resonance of the partnership.

ENHANCED ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The cross-property strategy significantly bolstered the Red Wings' social media presence. They rank among the top five in followers across the NHL on TikTok and Facebook and among the top ten on Twitter and Instagram. Their branded posts saw the most engagement of any NHL team during the 2022-23 season, and they were the most active major pro sports team in Detroit on social media over the past year, sharing over 1,450 branded posts.



BRANDS



NHL NEW LEAGUE PARTNERS

SEVEN NEW LEAGUE PARTNERS THIS SEASON



CANADA

Bet99

The Canadian betting behemoth bolstered its already impressive sponsorship stable with a new multi-year deal with the NHL— launching the league’s new free-to-play predictive game, hot on the heels of inking deals with the Ottawa Senators and Montreal Canadiens. Adding to an endorsement mix that spans from football and hockey to combat sports and music festivals, the new partnership underscores the brand’s strategic play for pole position in the betting world.

Hyundai

Hyundai and its Genesis luxury line became the Official Automotive Partner of the NHL and the NHLPA in Canada this season, building on a decade-long engagement with grassroots hockey.

With broad advertising opportunities within the league, including activations at NHL events and community initiative collaborations (a longtime Hyundai focus), the deal will help the brand market its electric car line-up to Canadian consumers.

Purex (Henkel)

In its first pro sports sponsorship deal, Purex became the Official Laundry Detergent of the NHL, granting the brand significant visibility during NHL games and engagement opportunities via in-store marketing programs and a consumer contest.



UNITED STATES

Jersey Mike’s

The sandwich chain’s new multi-year partnership— its inaugural foray into pro sports—designates Jersey Mike's as the Official Sub Sandwich of the NHL, providing the brand with exclusive marketing rights, broadcast exposure, and fan engagement opportunities at NHL events.



NORTH AMERICA

BioSteel

In its first alliance with a pro sports league, BioSteel— born in an NHL locker room and cofounded by a veteran player— became the Official Hydration Partner of both the NHL and the NHLPA. The multi-year deal includes league-wide marketing and visibility during NHL games, product supply rights, community engagement platforms, and player marketing rights. Leveraging its new high profile in the league, the brand launched a program timed to the NHL trade deadline, allowing fans to trade their Gatorade squirt bottles for BioSteel’s.



GLOBAL

Caterpillar

A new multi-year global sponsorship agreement made Texas-based Caterpillar the Official Heavy Equipment and Industrial Power Sponsor of the NHL, granting the brand product placement, TV-visible signage, and in-arena branding at key NHL events like All-Star Weekend and the Winter Classic. The NHL will collaborate with Caterpillar to promote hockey in local communities via Caterpillar's dealer network, while the brand will provide behind-the-scenes products and services at NHL games and special events.

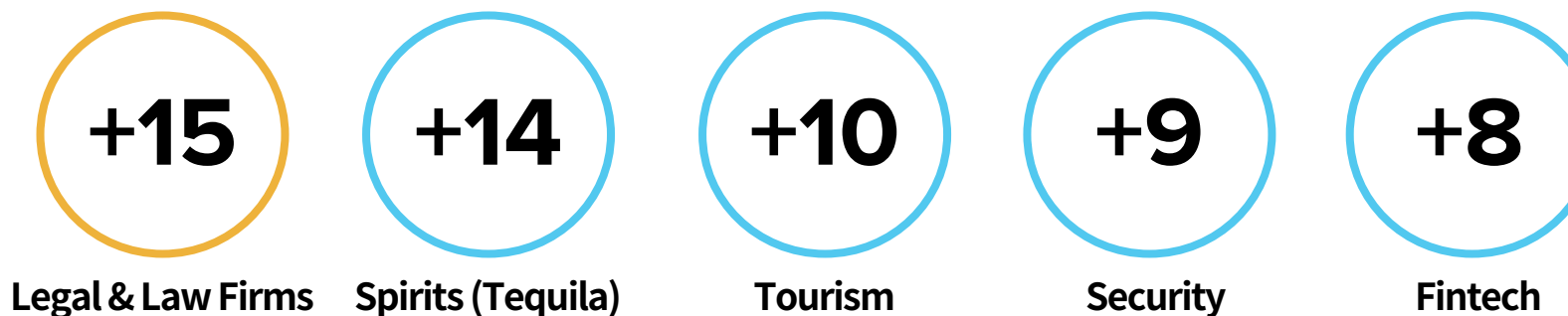
Sweet

In an unprecedented multi-year deal, the NHL, NHLPA, and the NHL Alumni Association are teaming up with NFT platform, Sweet, to make it the Official NFT Marketplace for the NHL, offering fans the chance to trade and collect digital tokens representing unique pieces of hockey history. The platform will feature NFTs showcasing both current and archival moments from the league, along with innovative gamification experiences, while special packs featuring highlights from marquee NHL events will also be available.





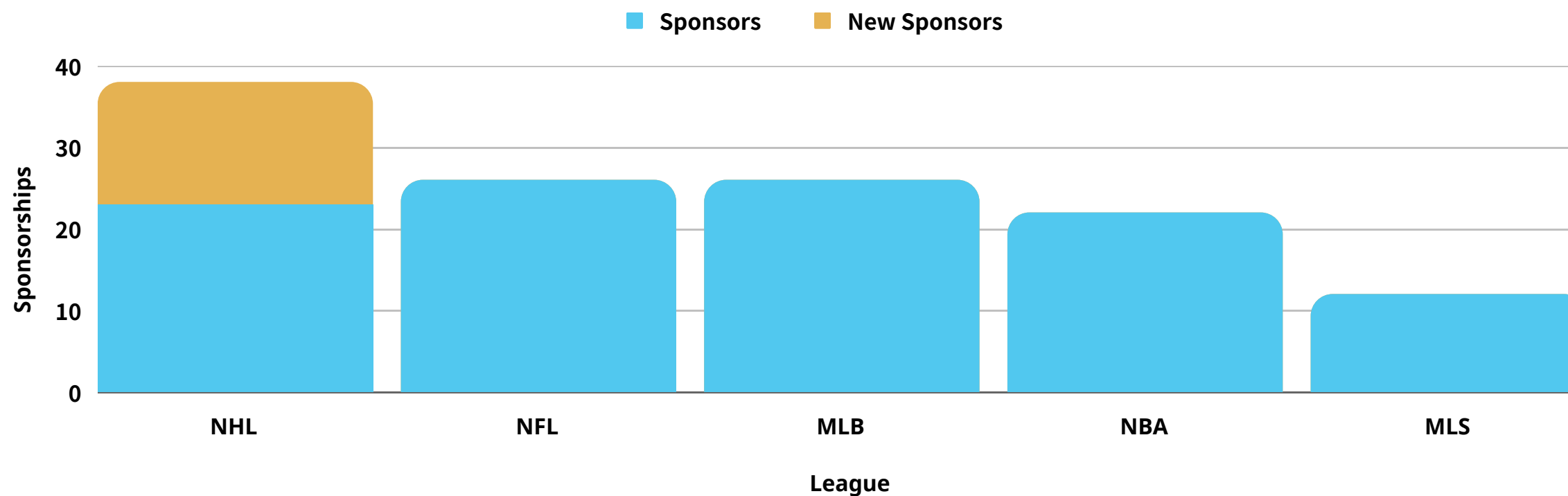
DEAL GROWTH:
2022 VS. 2021



The Legal Industry Takes to the Ice

A triumvirate of factors spur a significant rise in NHL sponsorships

LEGAL & LAW FIRM SPONSORS BY LEAGUE



Driven by the synergy of community engagement, elevated brand visibility, and unique in-game advertising opportunities, NHL sponsorships within the Legal & Law Firms subcategory rose a notable 19% YoY. An impressive 60% of NHL teams now have more than one Legal & Law Firms sponsor— twice as many as the previous season.



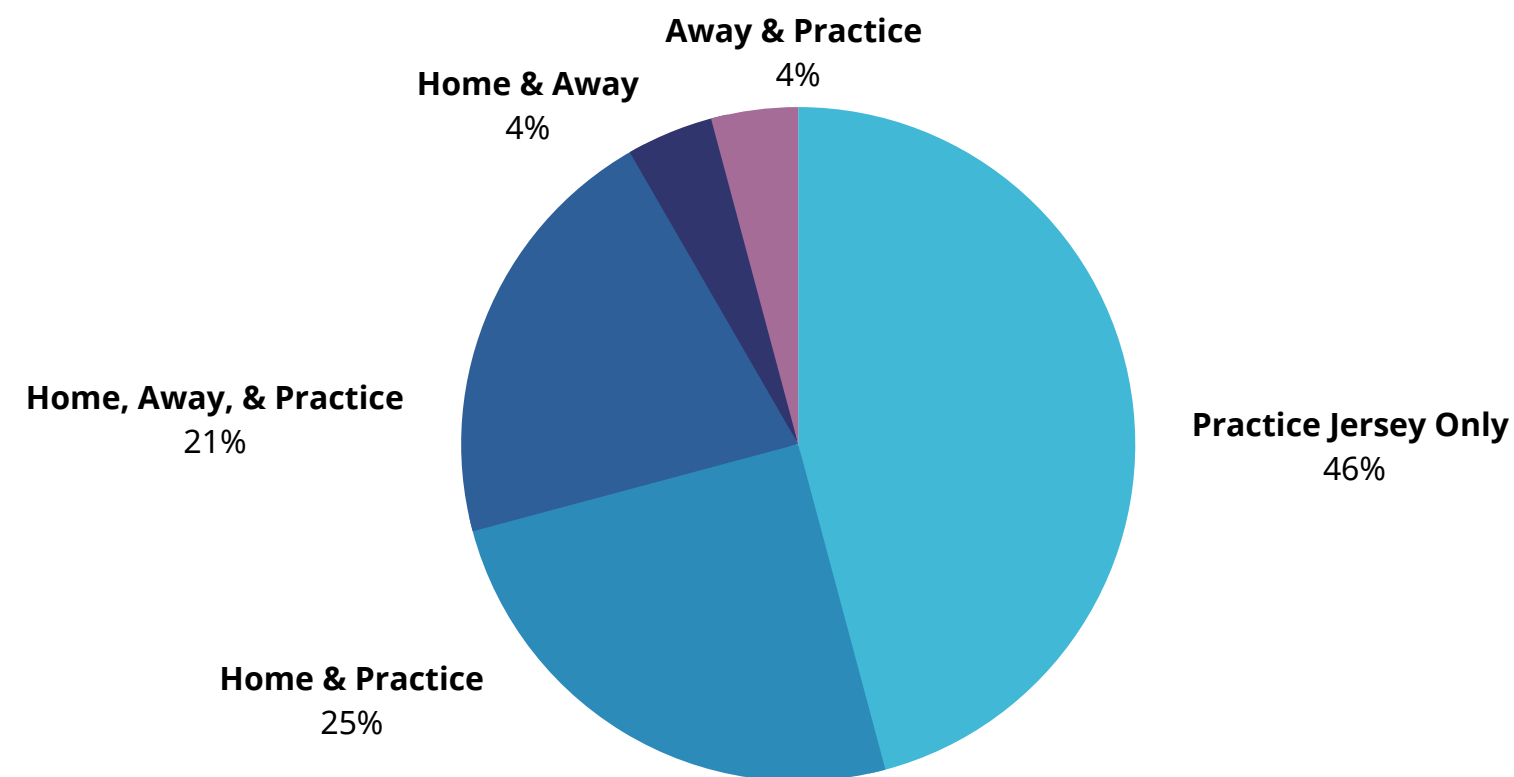


Patching Up a High-Profile Deal

Opportunities abound in the league's first foray into jersey patch sponsorships



NHL JERSEY PATCH SPONSORSHIP BY JERSEY TYPE



TOP 3 SPENDING CATEGORIES WITH NHL TEAMS WITHOUT A JERSEY PATCH



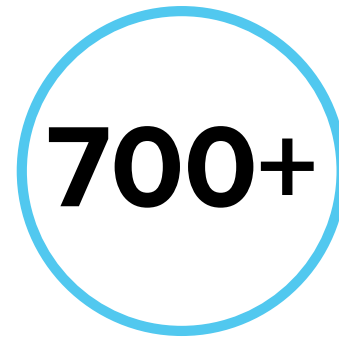
40% of jersey patch assets have already been sold in the NHL's inaugural season of the sponsorships, with five teams scoring partners for their home, away, and practice uniforms. Among them, the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Columbus Blue Jackets signed multiple sponsors— with the Healthcare, Financial, and Auto industries comprising 60% of purchasing brands— while the other three partnered with one brand. But as half of home and 70% of away assets remain unsold, opportunities abound for less prominent categories like Insurance, Quick Serve Restaurants (QSR), and Construction.

*Practice Jersey Asset is not new this season

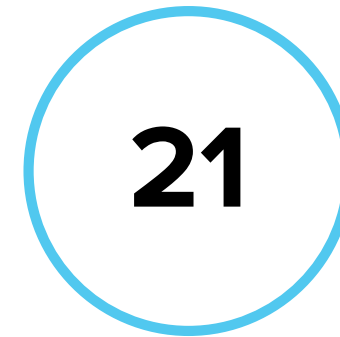


Digitally Enhanced Dashboards (DEDs) Take Center Stage

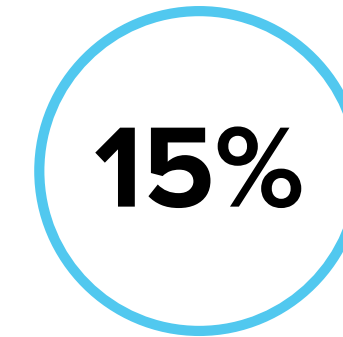
The AI-driven technology, which allows NHL broadcasts to constantly change which advertisers appear, is poised to transform league sponsorships



Unique brands



Average # of brands per NHL team



of all brands buying DEDs are Automotive



of all dashboards purchased are Automotive brands

Top teams utilizing DEDs



Top brands utilizing DEDs



Seven years in the making, DEDs represent the next frontier in NHL advertising, enabling the digital replacement of camera-visible ads within local, national, and international NHL game broadcasts. While the Automotive sector leads in DED exposure, the less diversified Financial category and rapidly rising Sports Betting category are quickly closing the gap. In the future, every broadcast of every game could feature completely different ads on the boards worldwide.

*NHL League Partner

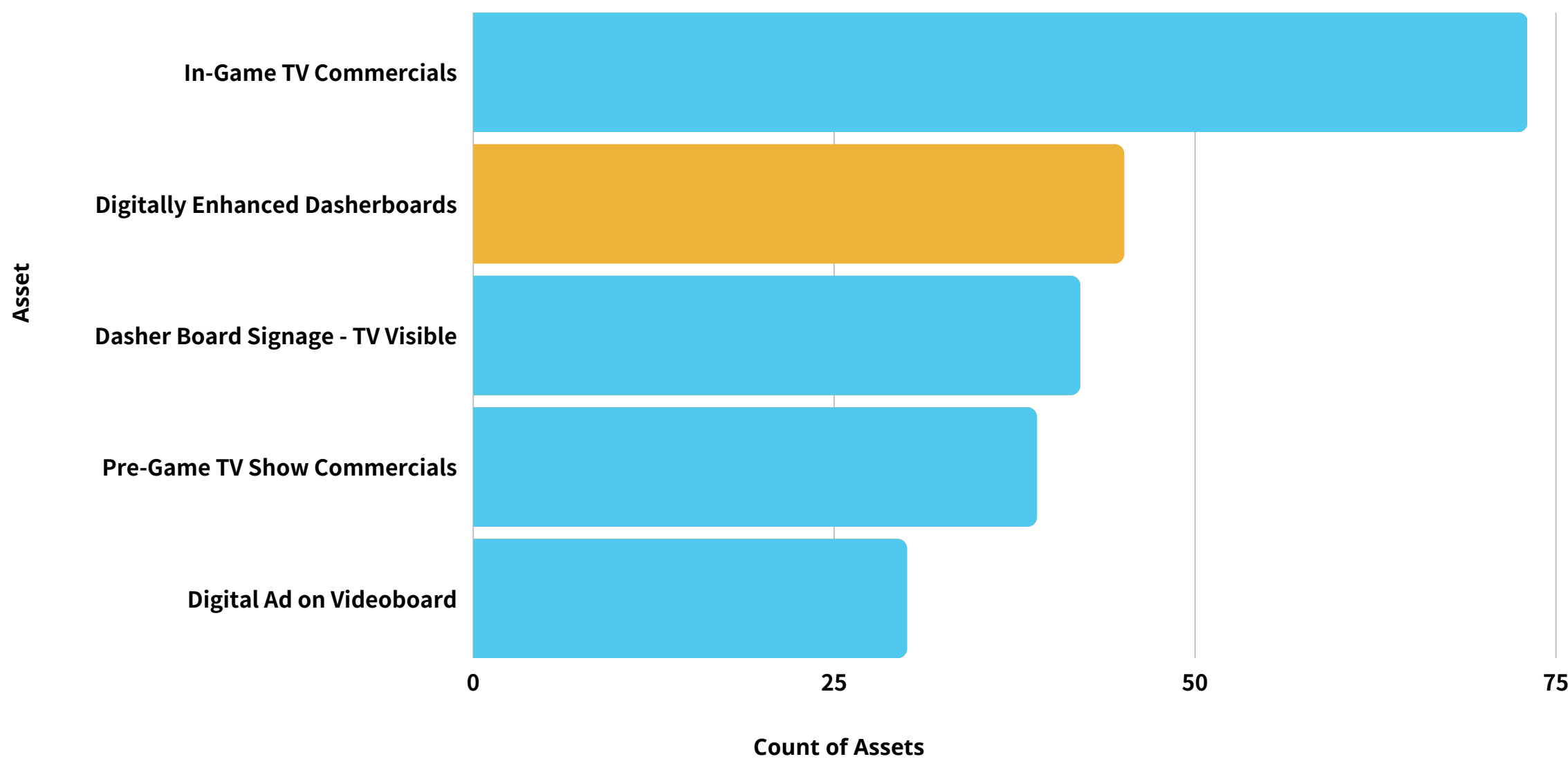


Betting Brands Go All-In On Digital

The exploding category is embracing virtual ads in a big way



TOP ASSETS: SPORTS BETTING & FANTASY BRANDS



The momentum of Sports Betting & Fantasy sponsorships continues to snowball, surging a remarkable 185% this season as the category embraces new virtual signage to enhance in-game sportsbook ads. Notably, a staggering 79% of sponsorships in the category now incorporate virtual signage, including DEDs— nearly 2.5x the league average of 33%.

MOST ACTIVE BRANDS

RANKED BY PROPERTY ASSET VOLUME WITH NHL TEAMS

Canada



USA

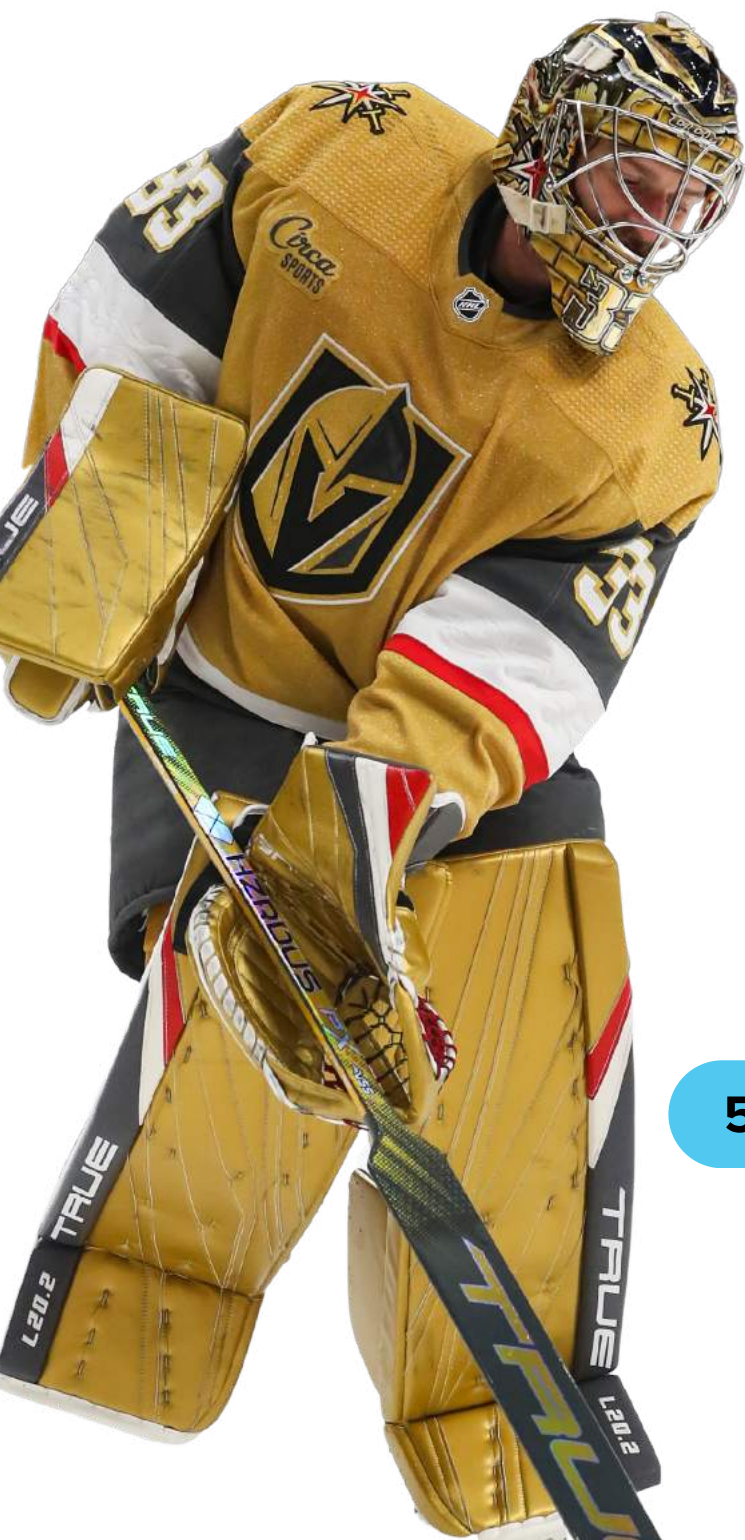


Adidas stands alone as the only brand to rank among the top five by sponsorship asset volume for both Canadian and American NHL properties, cementing its unrivaled position among active brands. Its unparalleled reach extends to social media, where it's the only brand to have posted with all NHL teams and the league itself this season— a stunning achievement that underscores adidas' exceptional influence and brand equity within professional hockey.

PROPERTIES



STANLEY CUP FINALS MATCHUP: VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS VS. FLORIDA PANTHERS



152

TOTAL NUMBER OF SPONSORSHIP DEALS

99

1.8M

TOTAL SOCIAL FOLLOWING

1.1M

3%

TOTAL YOY FOLLOWER GROWTH

7%

593K

TOTAL ENGAGEMENT ON BRANDED POSTS

71K



NOTABLE PARTNERS



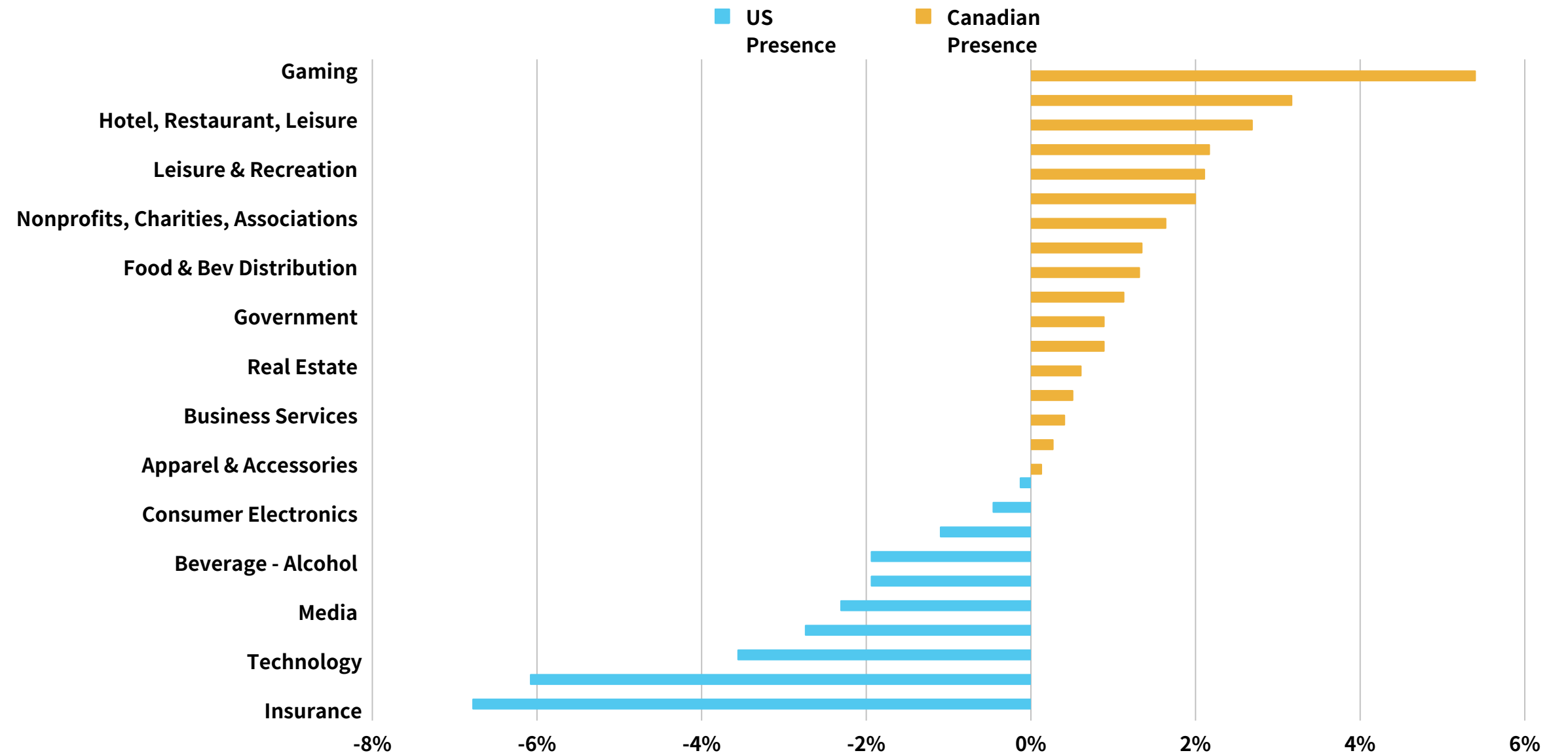


A Country-by-Country Approach

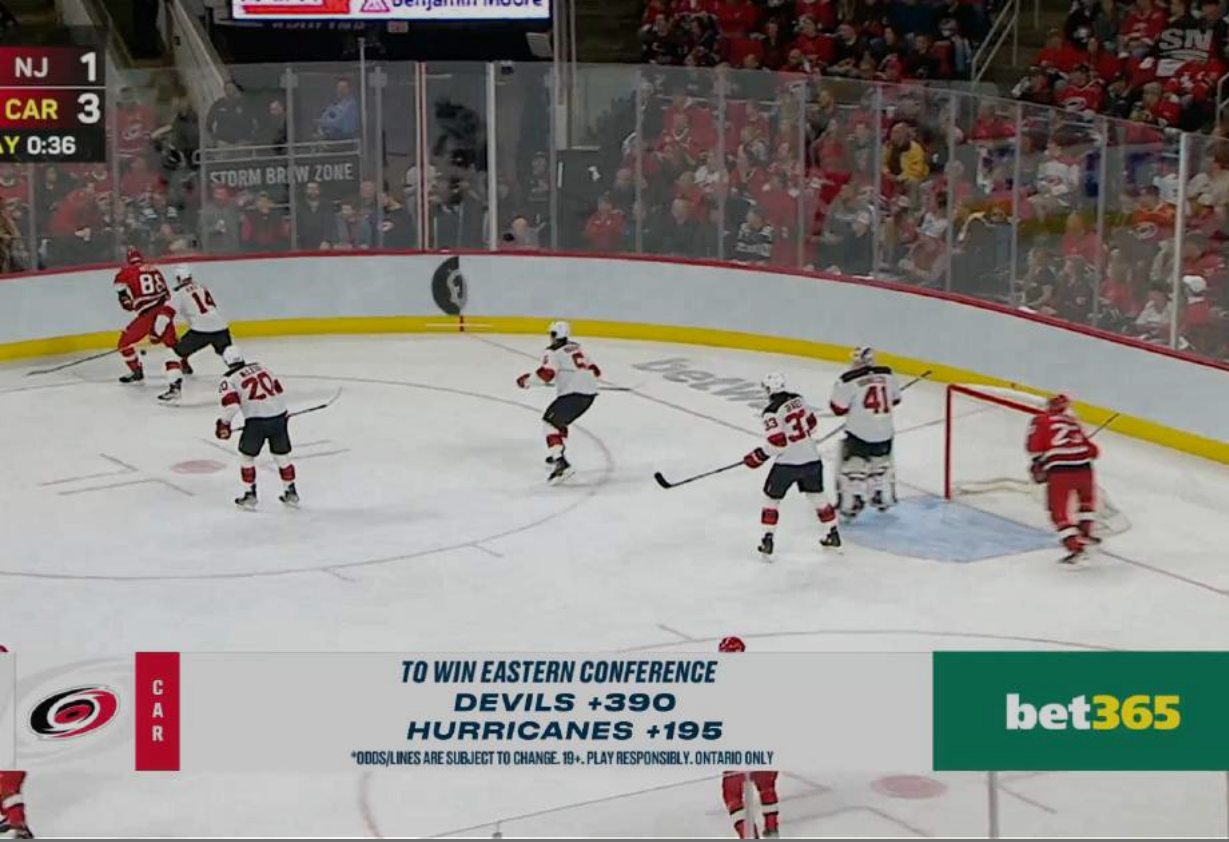
When it comes to broadcast advertising during NHL games, categories take a different tack in the US vs. Canada



CATEGORY COMPARISON: US VS. CANADA NATIONAL NETWORKS



Category advertising during NHL games on American and Canadian national broadcast networks varies widely. Insurance brands, led by league partner GEICO, are nearly 7% more active on US networks, while gaming ads on Canadian networks outpace those stateside by 5%, with NHL partner DraftKings topping the list.



Bet365 x Sportsnet

The Bet365 campaign was an innovative activation that created significant viewer engagement and was uniquely covered both in and outside of normal broadcast.

Generating >115M impressions over Sportsnet platforms throughout the NHL Playoffs, the campaign allowed Bet365 to reach a new audience.



ADVANCEMENT OF TRADITIONAL ASSETS ON SPORTSNET



NHL Broadcast - "Big Board"
Pre-Game Show—Sponsored Segment



NHL Playoff Broadcast - "Live Odds Brandsell"
In-Game Commercial



Kyper & Bourne - "Playoff Picks"
Sponsored Segment

UNIQUE ASSET: "WATCH A GAME WITH DANGLE" ON YOUTUBE



Alternative broadcasts are gaining traction in major pro sports: "Watch a Game with Dangle" was a Sportsnet Youtube livestream hosted by influencer Steve Dangle. During Game 5 of Leafs vs. Lightning playoffs, the livestream peaked at an impressive 365K views, and fans could actively engage through elements like polls and questions.

Due to breadth of this multichannel campaign, Bet365's results significantly outperformed those of major brands that were only on one channel. Bet365 attracted almost 92% more unique streamers and 3x the viewers vs. the major brands, with some playoff livestreams resulting in 7x the viewers vs. regular season.



TOP TEAMS BY SPONSORSHIP GROWTH

INCREASE IN DEAL GROWTH - 2022 VS. 2021

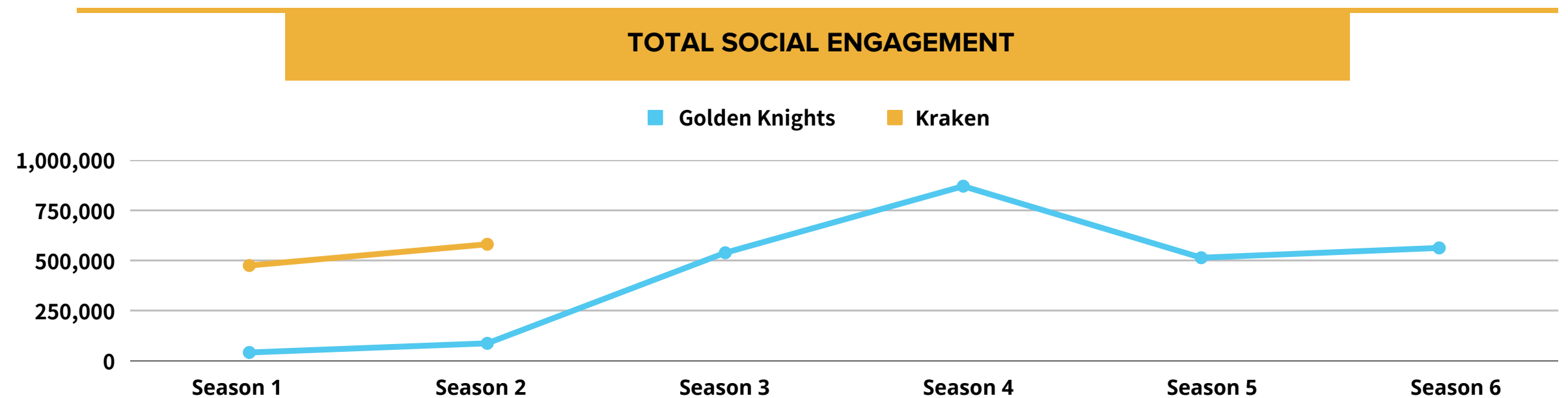
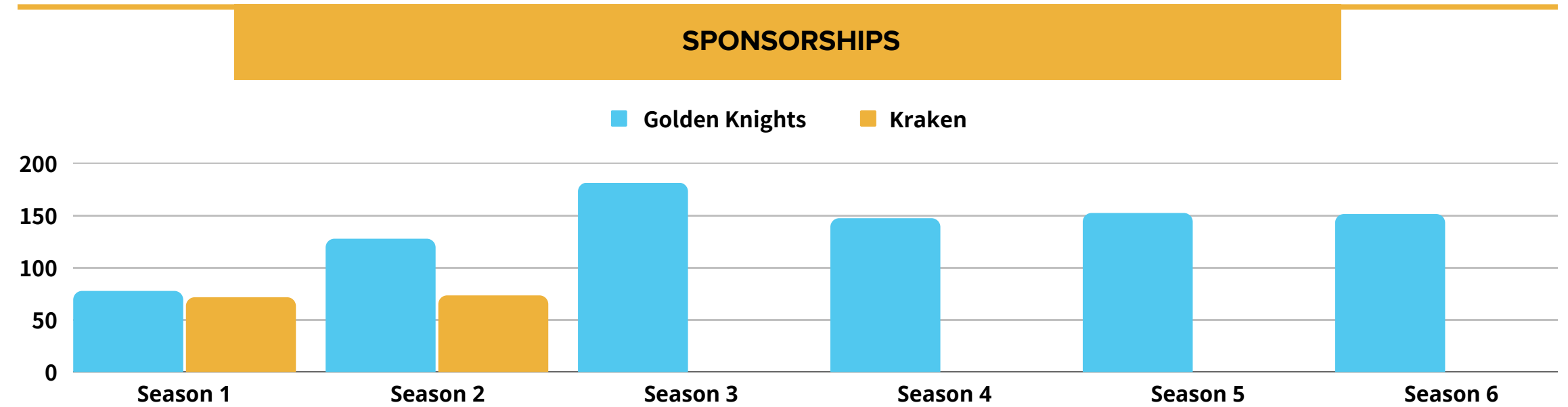


The Carolina Hurricanes have demonstrated exceptional growth in the sponsorship space, establishing themselves as leaders in the NHL. They have surpassed all other teams with their year-over-year growth rate. Additionally, in terms of total sponsorship deals, the Hurricanes hold a significant advantage, exceeding the second-place Washington Capitals by an impressive 30%



Kraken the Code on Social Media

The league's youngest team dominates in engagement after just two seasons



While the Seattle Kraken, the NHL's newest expansion team, has yet to match the Vegas Golden Knights— the league's second newest— in sponsorships, the Seattle-based squad is thriving on social media: in its inaugural two seasons, the Kraken boasts the second-highest audience engagement rate among all league teams— an exceptional feat.



INCREASE IN SPONSORSHIP DEALS WITH EMERGING NHL ASSETS



**Projected on Sideline Surface
(Digitally Enhanced Dasher boards)**
New to 2022-23 Season



Primary Jersey Patch
New to 2022-23 Season



Education Cause
53% Increase

Emerging Assets Take Center Ice

A new generation of assets are propelling sponsorships into the future, as teams embrace cause-related campaigns and virtual ads offer the potential to change the endorsement game in the NHL and beyond



Exterior Grounds Logo / Name
50% Increase



TV Intermission / Halftime Presenting Sponsor
30% Increase

Education was a key league focus this season, reflecting the growing prevalence of cause-related sponsorships in pro sports: brands partnering with NHL teams for an educational initiative increased a whopping 20%, with 70% of teams signing an education cause asset partner, compared to just 44% last year. Meanwhile, the NHL made headlines worldwide by debuting digitally enhanced dasherboards (DEDs)— arguably the most game-changing asset to emerge in years— as well as jersey patch sponsorships, offering brands a new high-profile exposure opportunity.



MOST SEARCHED TEAMS

RANKED BY TOTAL VISITS ON THE SPONSORUNITED PLATFORM



The Philadelphia Flyers, long recognized as one of the NHL's most prominent franchises, dominated in search volume this season, outperforming all other teams in the NHL and surpassing their metropolitan division rivals, the Pittsburgh Penguins, by 25%. The Flyers also rank among the top five teams by unique subcategories with assets tracked— demonstrating their appeal across industries— and among the top 10 teams by social following within the league.

MOST ENDORSED ATHLETES - CANADIAN & AMERICAN TEAMS

RANKED BY TOTAL BRANDS


Canadian Team Athletes

1 
Mitch Marner
 10

2 
Auston Matthews
 7

3 
Connor McDavid
 7

4 
Nick Suzuki
 4

5 
John Tavares
 3

American Team Athletes

1 
Brad Marchand
 9

2 
Bo Horvat
 6

3 
Alexander Ovechkin
 5

4 
Anze Kopitar
 4

5 
Andre Burakovsky
 4

The relationship between sponsorship volume and social media following in the NHL varies greatly between Canada and the US. The league's three most endorsed Canadian players— McDavid, Matthews, and Marner— rank first, second, and fourth, respectively, by follower count among all NHL athletes. However, among the top five American leaders in sponsorships, only Brad Marchand ranks in the top 25 most followed players in the league.

MOST ENDORSED PLAYOFF ATHLETES RANKED BY TOTAL BRANDS



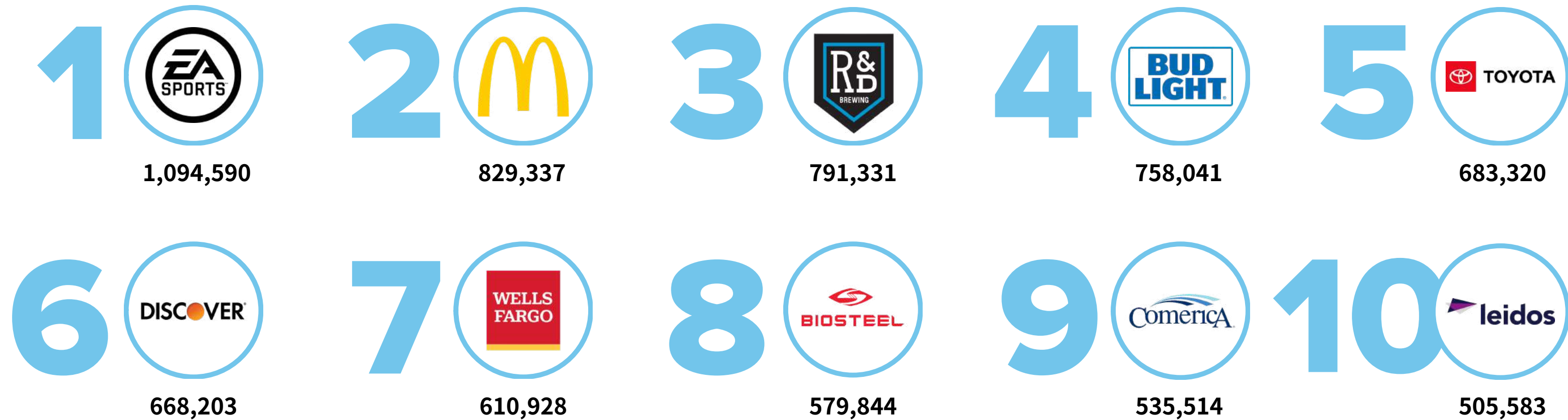
While Mitch Marner leads among all athletes in terms of total brand partnerships, his teammate Auston Matthews surpassed him in the realm of social media campaigns, spearheading 3 of the top 4 branded campaigns among NHL athletes by total engagement. His partnership with CCM Hockey was especially successful, driving substantial interaction and capturing the attention of a wide audience.

SOCIAL



austonmatthews  #ad Proud to be joining #TeamRBC. As one of the most trusted and innovative brands, @rbc is best in class and I'm excited to work together and support their ideas and initiatives.

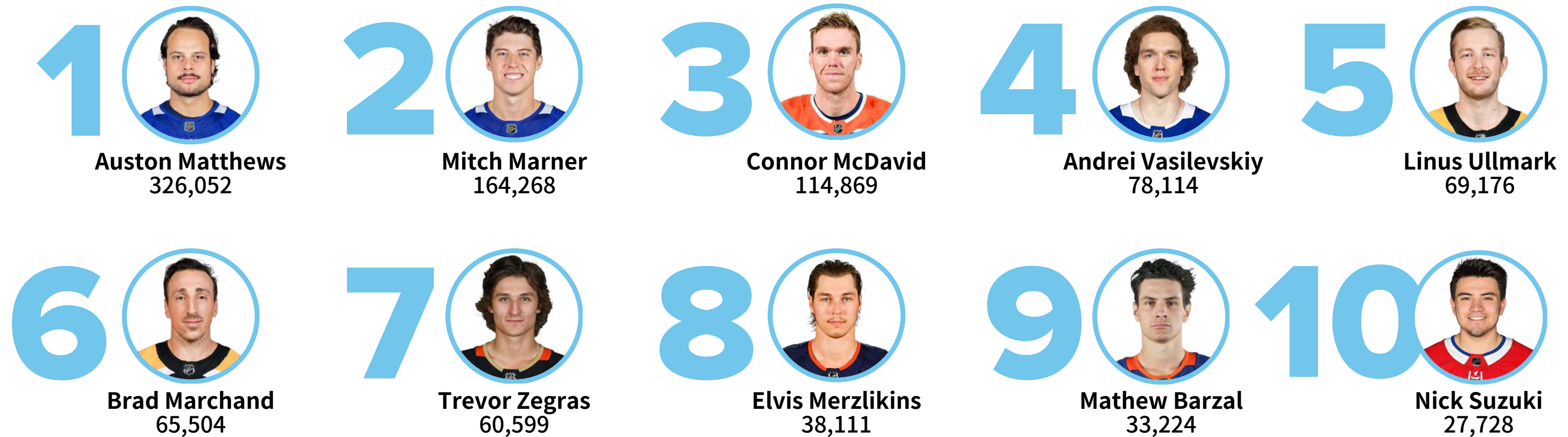
MOST ENGAGING BRANDS RANKED BY TOTAL ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA



The Banking subcategory dominates NHL social media, with nearly 3x the branded engagement of Non-US Car Manufacturers in the #2 spot. With 40 active brands, it's also the sole subcategory to surpass 3M in total engagement.

MOST ENGAGING ATHLETES

RANKED BY TOTAL BRANDED ENGAGEMENT



The top 10 most engaging NHL players on social media showcase the league's global appeal: the five nationalities represented include five Canadian players, underscoring Canada's influence and impact in the league. Auston Matthews tops the list, eclipsing his closest competitor, Maple Leaf teammate Mitch Marner, by nearly 2x. Notably, Matthews' and Marner's engagement together roughly equals that of the rest of the top 10 combined.

TOP ATHLETES BY POST VOLUME

RANKED BY TOTAL BRANDED POSTS



While Auston Matthews leads in overall engagement, he ranks sixth by branded content, signaling that high social media engagement doesn't necessarily align with branded partnership post volume. Furthermore, seven of the top 10 players are forwards, while the remaining three are goaltenders, indicating that attacking players account for more branded posts— with a strong connection to engagement— on social media.

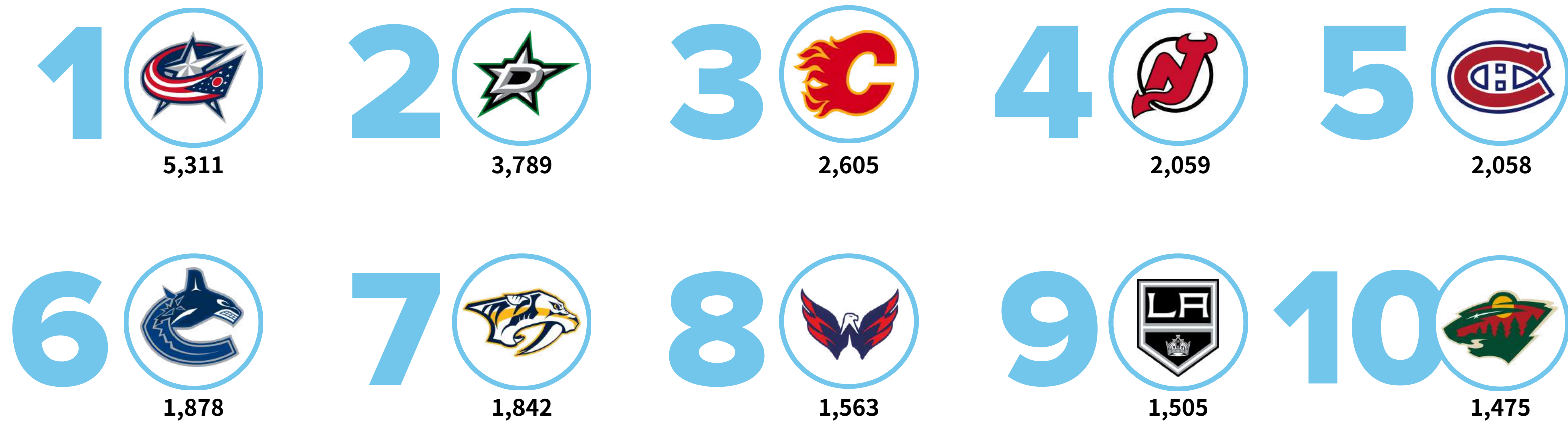
MOST ENGAGING TEAMS RANKED BY TOTAL ENGAGEMENT



Despite the standalone popularity of NHL teams, the league’s official account still leads with more than 3M engagements—unlike the NBA, NFL, and MLS— where select teams outrank their respective league accounts by engagement. Only three of the top 10 teams— the Dallas Stars, Boston Bruins, and Minnesota Wild— are contenders in 2023 Stanley Cup Playoffs, implying that social media engagement doesn’t necessarily correspond with on-ice performance or playoff status.

TOP TEAMS BY POST VOLUME

RANKED BY TOTAL BRANDED POSTS



The Columbus Blue Jackets reign supreme as the branded post leader across NHL social media, with a commanding 40% lead over the second-place Dallas Stars. The Blue Jackets also tie for second-place with the Vegas Golden Knights for brand partners on social media, with 70. Notably, the teams approach their social media partnerships differently: the Blue Jackets average a robust 75 posts per brand— ranking them among the top performers in the NHL by post volume— while Knights’ strategy is more conservative, at 10 posts per brand on average.



METHODOLOGY

This report offers an in-depth analysis of brand sponsorships, endorsements and social engagement across the National Hockey League (NHL) and its athletes. Compiled using SponsorUnited's proprietary platform, the data encompasses more than 2,300 brands, 360 assets, and over 44,000 social posts.

The report was jointly authored by SponsorUnited's Marketing Research & Insights and Marketing Departments, using data from January 2018 through May 2023.



THANK YOU

Want more insights? Email info@SponsorUnited.com