

2025-2026 NBA Regular Season

ONE SEASON. THREE DIFFERENT OPPORTUNITIES.



How Relo Metrics and GumGum's Mindset Graph™ reveal that broadcast, social, and contextual advertising each peaked at different moments and why brands should plan for all three.

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The NBA season rewards brands and rights holders that know when to show up – and how

The 2025-2026 NBA season generated **\$3.7B** in sponsor media value across broadcast, social, and the open web. The biggest moments were exactly where you'd expect them. But the full picture was more complex – different channels peaked at different times, different audiences showed up in different places, and some of the season's most valuable windows had nothing to do with a live game. Here's what the data actually showed.



\$3.7B

Total sponsor media value across broadcast, streaming and social media

12.4m

TOTAL BRAND EXPOSURES ACROSS BROADCAST, STREAMING AND SOCIAL

402b

TOTAL SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS WITH BRAND EXPOSURE

12b

TOTAL SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS WITH BRAND EXPOSURE

399k

TOTAL SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS ANALYZED

220+

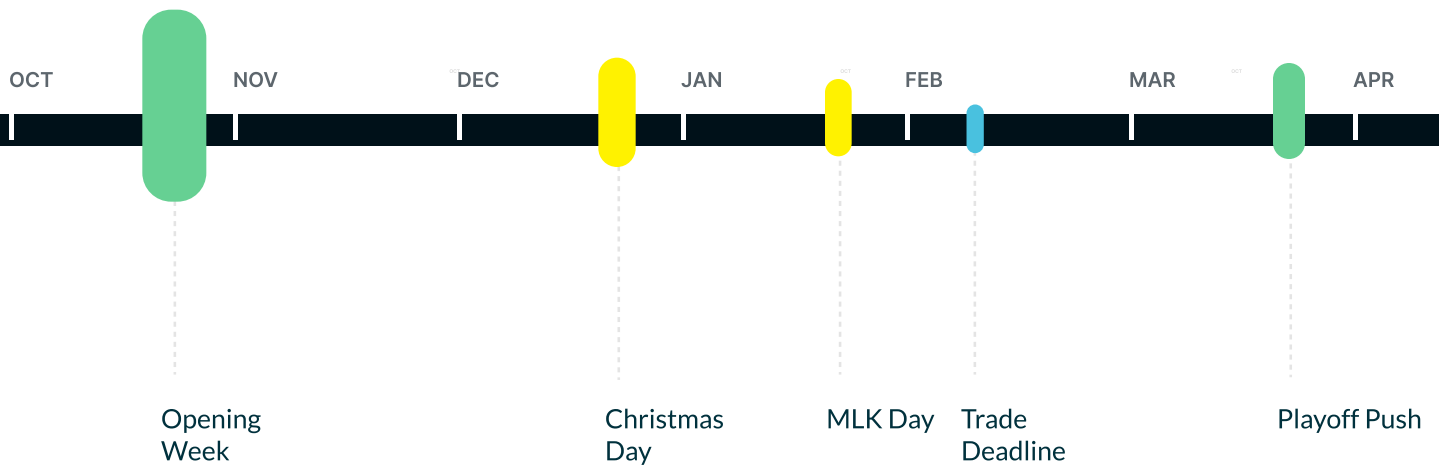
BRANDS EARNING \$1M+ IN SPONSOR MEDIA VALUE

2,000+

BRANDS WITH MEASURABLE EXPOSURE VALUE

Here's what shaped the 2025-2026 NBA commercial season from October to April

Broadcast, social media, and contextual advertising opportunities peaked at different moments during the NBA season – providing different ways for brands to show up.



Analysis draws on Relo Census broadcast and social data alongside GumGum's Mindset Graph™



Contextual Momentum

Shows where NBA audiences are reading and thinking about the league across the open web – including windows with no live inventory at all. Opening Week and the Playoff Push outpaced Christmas Day on the open web.



Broadcast & Streaming

Reaches the largest and most concentrated audiences during nationally televised windows. Christmas Day and MLK Day are the season's peak moments – high reach, premium inventory, dominated by league partners.



Social Media

Tracks fan energy in real time – spiking around trades, results, and behind the scenes moments. Trade reactions and real-time conversation generated one of the NBA season's largest social sponsorship spikes without relying on a major broadcast event.



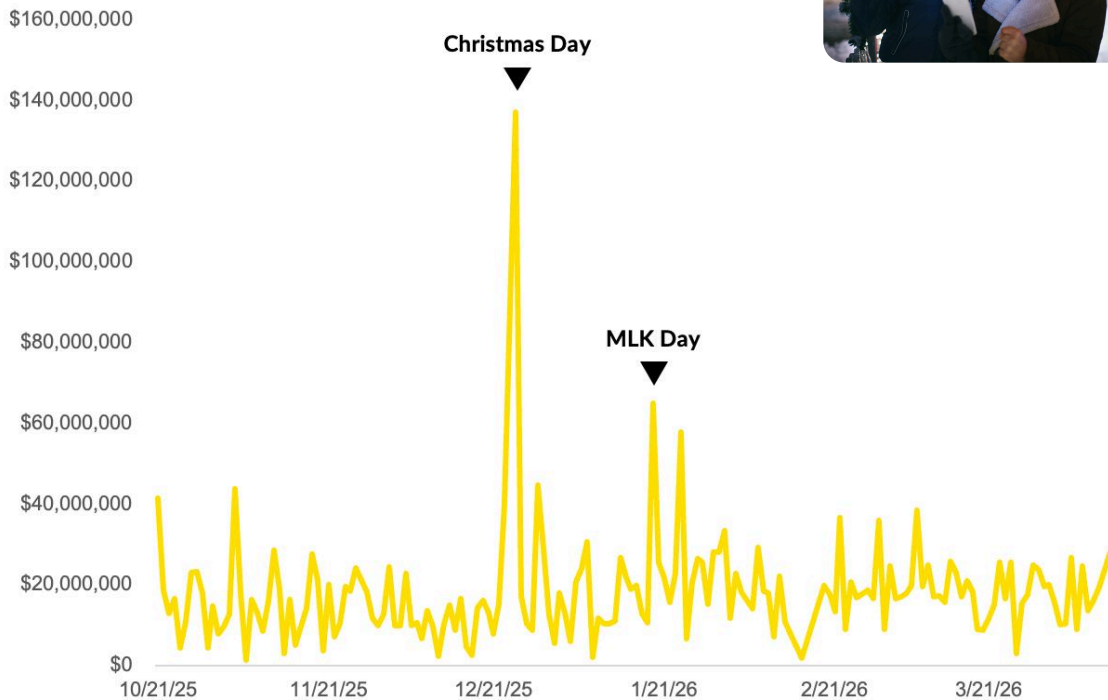
No single channel covers the full NBA audience. The brands that showed up across all three – in the right moments, through the right mediums – are the ones that compounded value across the season.

The NBA's biggest broadcast moments carried a disproportionate share of sponsorship value



THE RHYTHM OF NBA BROADCAST VALUE | BY DAY

Source: Relo Census, Broadcast Data, 2025-2026 NBA Regular Season



\$137m

Five Christmas Day games generated **\$137M in broadcast sponsor media value – more than any other single day of the regular season.** League partners took home 81 cents of every dollar. The league prices Christmas Day accordingly, and the numbers reflect it.

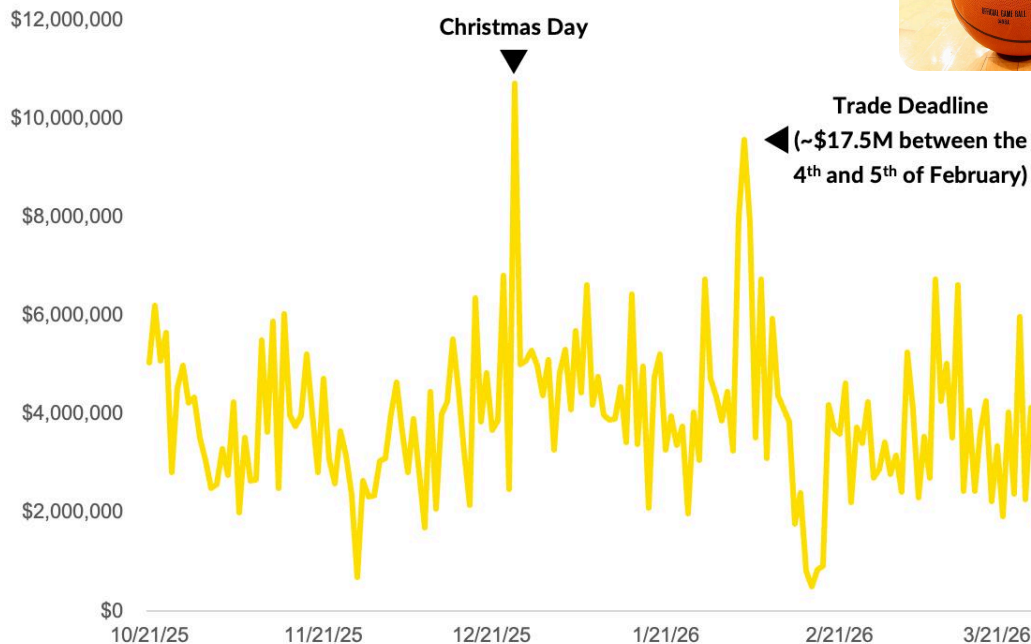
\$17.5m

For the handful of brands on premium league inventory, Christmas Day delivered. For everyone else, the opportunity looks different – quieter moments, when league partners step back, are where team sponsors and regional brands can own the conversation. **The Trade Deadline contributed to \$17.5M in social media value.**

The reaction economy doesn't run on a media plan

THE RHYTHM OF NBA SOCIAL VALUE

Source: Relo Census, Broadcast Data, 2025-2026 NBA Regular Season



Social media has become its own sponsorship environment – one that operates on fan energy rather than a broadcast schedule. Value doesn't wait for tip-off.

The brands that captured the most social value won't necessarily be the biggest spenders. They are the ones already inside the content ecosystem when the conversation moved. You can't buy your way into a spike after it happens. The brands with always-on social presence and fast-moving content teams were already there.

Branded Content

Sponsor-integrated posts designed for social, published around key NBA moments – planned reactivity at its best.

TV-visible signage

Court, apron, and arena signage captured in broadcast frames and shared across social – value that travels with the clip.

Organic social

Jersey patches, apparel, and brand mentions surfacing naturally in team and fan content.

The NBA captured digital attention beyond the moments that drove the most sponsorship value



SEASONAL MOMENTS

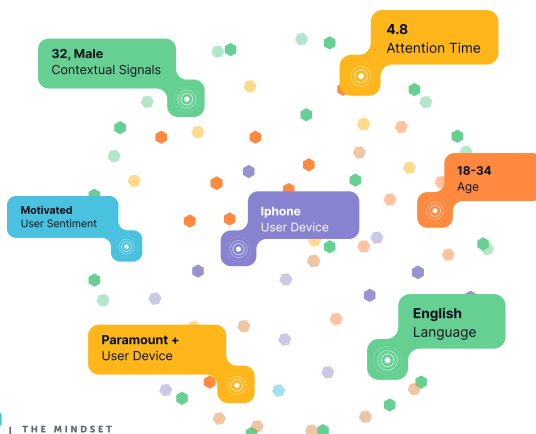
Source: GumGum Mindset Portal, Seasonal Moments, 2025-2026 NBA Regular Season

Measures how often NBA-related content appeared across the open web – independent of social engagement or broadcast viewership. Indexed to 100 at peak.



NBA contextual momentum peaked twice – at Opening Week in October and the Playoff Push in late April. Both windows outpaced Christmas Day on the open web. During these periods, NBA-related content was saturating digital reading environments at a level the in-season broadcast windows never matched.

Once the season tips off, fan attention shifts to social and broadcast. But in the weeks before and after; when the open web is buzzing with previews, roster moves, and playoff narratives – contextual advertising offers a way to reach a highly engaged NBA audience. For teams, these windows are an opportunity to drive direct outcomes: ticket sales, streaming subscriptions, merchandise. The audience is already reading about the NBA. The question is whether brands are showing up where that reading is happening.



GumGum Mindset Graph™

GumGum’s AI-powered data engine that identifies the real-time signals shaping consumer mindset across the open web. The Mindset Portal brings that intelligence to life, helping teams explore insights, visualize opportunities, and turn data into smarter campaign strategy.

What the 2025-2026 season tells brands and rights holders about 2026-2027

The data from the 2025-2026 season points to three distinct windows with each requiring a different approach. The brands and teams that treated them as one continuous strategy left value on the table.



01

Before season tip-off, own the contextual window

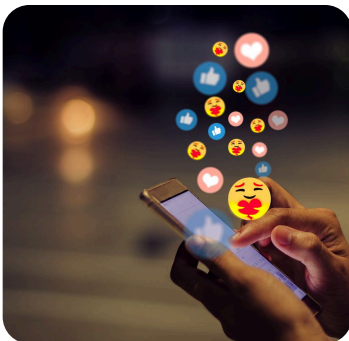
NBA content saturates the open web before the season starts – previews, roster moves, expectations. This is when you build relevance cheaply, before in-season inventory peaks in price and competition. Most brands wait until tip-off. That's too late.



02

During national windows, go big or counter-program

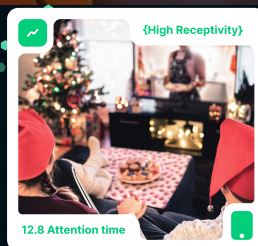
Christmas Day and MLK Day are league partner territory on broadcast. If you're in, maximize every placement. If you're not, social and contextual are where challenger brands and team sponsors can stay relevant without competing for inventory they can't access.



03

Stay ready – the best social windows aren't on the calendar

Fan conversation can spike at any point in the season: a trade, a highlight, a viral moment. For teams, these are publishing opportunities that reward speed. For brands, being embedded in team content before the spike is what determines whether you capture the value or watch it pass.



Knowing which window is working requires seeing all three at once. That's what Relo Census and GumGum's Mindset Graph™ make possible.

The Three-Layer Playbook is the foundation – but brands still need to adapt to their audience and goals

Each brand enters the NBA season with its own objectives. The right balance between broadcast, social, and contextual ultimately depends on who you're trying to reach.

80.6% of NBA Christmas Day viewers were aged 35+

Christmas Day was the season's single biggest reach moment, but its audience skewed heavily older. For brands targeting younger or more culturally engaged consumers, broadcast alone isn't enough.

Source: VideoAmp Data, average live audience per NBA Christmas Day game across ABC & ESPN



DIFFERENT GOALS AND AUDIENCES REQUIRE DISTINCT ACTIVATION PRIORITIES

BRAND OBJECTIVE	AUDIENCE BEHAVIOR	ACTIVATION EMPHASIS
National Reach	Fans concentrating around marquee games	Broad Visibility
Younger Audiences	High engagement across social media	Social Media Activations
Cultural Relevance	Fans engaging beyond live games	Contextual Presence



For team sponsors, national broadcast windows like Christmas Day are largely league territory. Social and contextual are where local and regional brands can compete.

Christmas Day concentrated more sponsorship value than any other moment of the NBA season

2025 CHRISTMAS DAY

BROADCAST DATA

\$136.9m

TOTAL BROADCAST SPONSOR MEDIA VALUE

League partners earned ~81% of broadcast value on Christmas

AVG LIVE AUDIENCE

4.2m

AVERAGE VIEWERS PER GAME

vs 1.7M average viewers across ESPN networks season-long

SOCIAL DATA

\$10.7m

TOTAL SOCIAL SPONSOR MEDIA VALUE

vs \$3.8M daily social media value throughout the season

CHRISTMAS GAME	P2+ VIEWERSHIP	EXPOSURES	DURATION (SEC)	BROADCAST SMV
Timberwolves @ Nuggets	2,534,939 (ABC) 735,582 (ESPN)	3.6K	32.3K	\$38.2M
Spurs @ Thunder	3,399,529 (ABC) 1,202,070 (ESPN)	2.5K	23.6K	\$26.8M
Mavericks @ Warriors	3,302,818 (ABC) 1,014,447 (ESPN)	3K	23.7K	\$26.6M
Cavaliers @ Knicks	3,708,213 (ABC) 1,201,827 (ESPN)	2.4K	21.3K	\$23.6M
Rockets @ Lakers	3,033,169 (ABC) 941,062 (ESPN)	2.1K	19.4K	\$21.7M

**VideoAmp Viewership Data: VideoAmp's methodology commingles various data inputs, such as Set-Top Box data and Smart TV data from Automatic Content Recognition (ACR) providers, creating a comprehensive footprint of 39 million households and 63 million devices. P2+ represents the total viewership of persons aged 2+. Viewership does not include OOH (out of home) viewing figures.*

National broadcast windows concentrated value – creating distinct opportunities for different stakeholders

63%

Of the total broadcast value was driven by games on the following national networks: ABC/ESPN, NBC/Peacock and Amazon Prime.

National broadcast windows naturally concentrate value among league partners. Here's what that means for competitor brands, media companies, teams.

THREE PLAYERS. THREE DIFFERENT PLAYS.



01

Competitor brands should counter-program, not compete

Brands outside the league level partnership tier should lean into social and contextual during marquee national windows to reach a more diversified audience without fighting for inventory that isn't available to them.



02

Media companies monetize the demand that leagues create

Broadcasters can monetize brands that want proximity to national windows without sponsorship access through commercial spots, studio signage, and broadcast graphics.



03

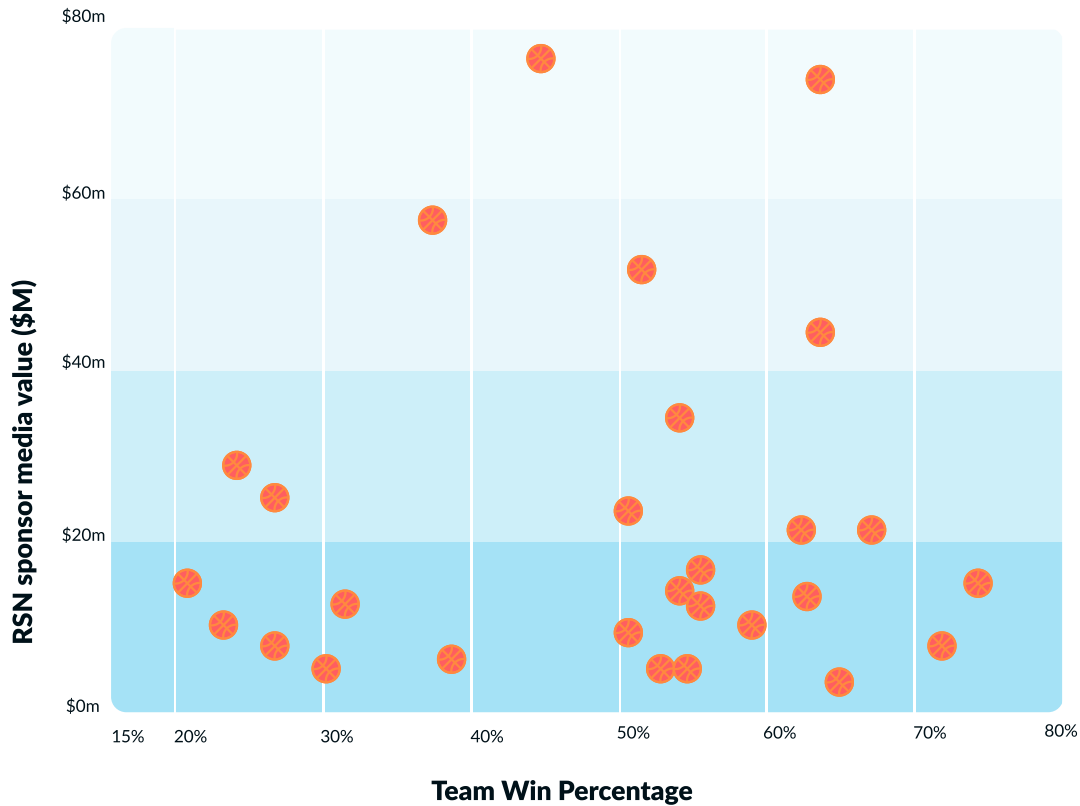
Teams should turn broadcast attention into social inventory

The social conversation, creator content, and fan engagement around marquee games belongs to the teams. Package it, price it and sell it to brands that want to stay relevant when broadcast inventory is out of reach.

A team's record shapes how broadcast value is delivered, not how much

RSN SPONSOR MEDIA VALUE (SMV) VS. WIN PERCENTAGE | TEAM SPONSORS

Source: Relo Census, Broadcast Data, Regional Sports Network Only, 2025 - 2026 NBA Season



Most teams cluster in the \$5–20M band regardless of win percentage. For local sponsors, that consistency is the story – predictable returns across the season, in markets of all sizes, whether the team is contending or rebuilding.



Teams generated a surprisingly consistent level of sponsor media value for their local partners through regional broadcasts – landing in a \$5–20M range across the season regardless of where they finished in the standings. Winning teams were pulled onto national broadcasts – fewer local games, but higher-profile ones. Losing teams stayed local – more games, more inventory, more opportunity for their partners. Either way, local sponsors earned.

The 2025-2026 NBA season delivered \$3.7B in SMV, and a clearer picture of where future opportunity lives

\$3.7b

TOTAL SPONSOR
MEDIA VALUE

Across all platforms

\$136.9m

CHRISTMAS DAY -
BROADCAST SMV

The single biggest event of
NBA's regular season

\$17.5m

TRADE DEADLINE -
SOCIAL SMV

The second largest spike of
NBA's regular season

HOW TO PLAN SMARTER FOR THE 2026-2027 SEASON:



01

Plan around the multiple commercial peaks of the NBA season

Brands, agencies, teams should identify the moments that align with their objectives rather than treating the season as one continuous window.



03

Leverage different channels for different goals

Use broadcast for reach, social media to capitalize on fan reaction, and contextual advertising for sustained attention.



02

Don't rely exclusively on the marquee moments

Christmas Day is highly valuable, but Opening Week, the Trade Deadline, and the Playoff Push all created opportunities to reach fans in different ways.



04

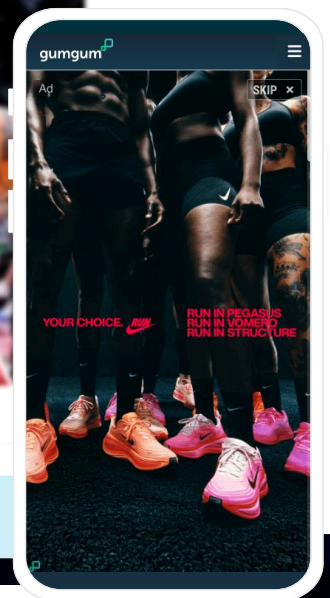
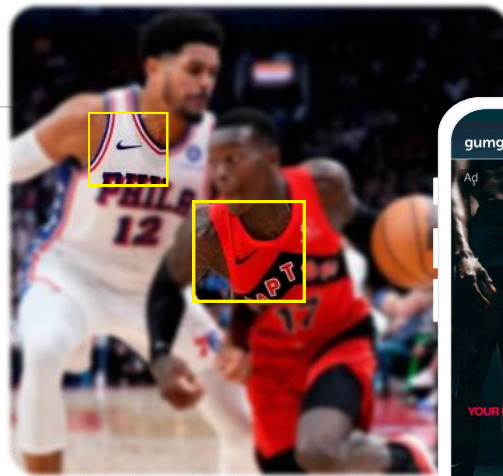
Use data to identify missed opportunities

Some of the season's strongest opportunities emerged outside traditional sponsorship peaks. Measurement helps understand where value is growing.

The 2025-2026 NBA data showed where the opportunity lives and this is how brands can act on it

Knowing when and where value was created is only a part of the winning formula. The opportunity is activating the audiences behind those high-value moments. GumGum Sports Media powered by Relo Metrics enables that, turning sponsorship into advertising opportunities.

GumGum Sports Media: Replay and Counterplay, powered by Relo Metrics, helps brands identify the exact households exposed to their logo or competitors during a live event (such as an NBA game), and allows brands to re-engage with those audiences by carrying sponsorship moments in their digital campaigns.



TWO WAYS TO ACTIVATE SPONSORSHIP AUDIENCES:



01

Replay: Re-engage fans who saw your brand

Households confirmed to have seen a brand during a live NBA broadcast can be retargeted across digital channels. Use Replay to reach fans with verified prior exposure and re-engage them with digital ads when they're most primed to respond.



02

Counterplay: Turn competitor exposure into your advantage

Identify fans exposed to a competitor's sponsorship during a live NBA broadcast and reach them directly. Leverage Counterplay to turn a rival's sponsorship moment into a conquering opportunity.

Three channels. Multiple peaks. One season's worth of data. The brands that measure well are already ahead. The ones that activate on that measurement will pull further ahead still.

Turn 2025-2026 data into 2026-2027 advantage and leverage these insights to plan smarter for next season



The 2025-2026 NBA season delivered record data and value across broadcast and social media platforms.

Use these insights to shape your 2026 strategy: refine asset performance, identify emerging partners, and optimize exposure across every asset and media channel.

The Relo team can help you translate insights into action. [Book time with our team](#) for a strategic consult and data review and discover how Relo Metrics can guide your next move.

Get Started on Your Strategy 

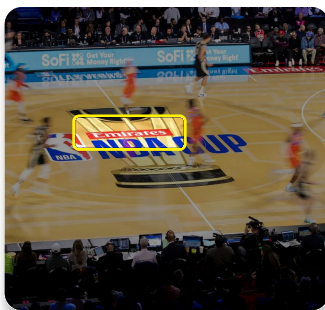


About Relo

Relo Metrics is an AI-powered analytics platform transforming how sponsorship value is measured in live sports and entertainment. By combining computer vision, machine learning, and near real-time data, the platform delivers automated, high-precision insights to help brands, teams, and agencies maximize sponsorship ROI and make more informed decisions.

About GumGum

GumGum is the mindset company transforming advertising. We deliver results by matching brands with people in the right mindset, in the moments that matter. Powered by the Mindset Graph™, our AI-driven data engine processes millions of real-time contextual, creative, environmental, and historical signals to match every ad with the most receptive audience. The result is advertising that drives meaningful outcomes for advertisers and publishers, and is more relevant for consumers. Founded in 2008 and headquartered in Santa Monica, GumGum operates in over 19 markets across North America, Europe, Japan, and Australia.



Get Started on Your Strategy 