



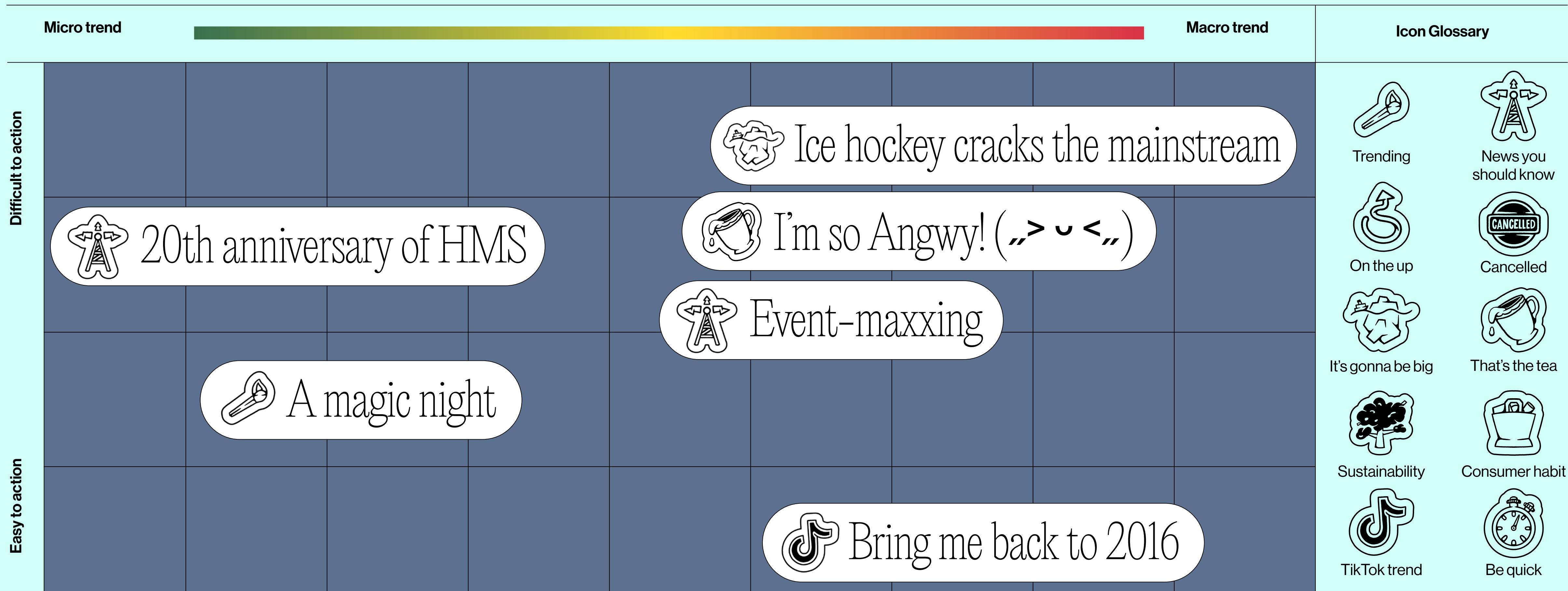
WEEKLY TRENDS REPORT

Friday 23 January 2026



Pictured: iStock

THIS WEEK'S FORECAST



FOR YOUR INFO

This week's dates & microtrends

TikTok trends

The [2016 trend](#). We're nostalgic for [sneaker culture](#) and the Rio De Janeiro filter.

[Jessica is the new Karen](#)? It's not too late to change your name.

ICYMI

It's three weeks late but we must [bring the 365 buttons meme](#) to your attention.

[Kai Cenat quit streaming](#) to pursue being a fashion designer.

Phrase of the week

The "[I'm in a very Chinese time in my life](#)" trend. It's not what you think! It's all about following Chinese wellness habits like drinking hot water.

Digi updates

The "[Are you dead](#)" app goes viral for the growing lonely single cohort.



On our radar



No Other Choice – 23 January
The Moment – 30 January



Wonder Man – 27 January
Shrinking S3 – 28 January
Bridgerton S4 – 29 January

Insights of the week

Scientists are doubting the [validity of reports on how much microplastics](#) are in our bodies.

The [secretive V.I.P. programmes for mobile gamers](#) who spend lots of \$\$. Can we get in for our £10 contribution to Clash of Clans?.

Weekly doses of cute

[Timothy the goat](#), [stretch of the day](#) and painting [Smiski the Jester](#).

Rising trends

The growing demand for everything analogue: [cute stationery](#), [porn mags](#) and [needlepoint](#).

People's stomachs are rumbling for [retro 70s food](#)?

The future

The US has lost its higher education dominance as [Chinese universities dominate the global rankings](#).

Stat of the week

Please check your ears. [60% of 18-29-year-olds](#) have listened to 3 hours of AI music a week.

Franchise to watch

The greatest movie ever made, *High School Musical*, [celebrates its 20th anniversary](#) by releasing the entire film in [52 parts on TikTok](#).



Image: [@ashleytisdalefrench](#)



Image: [@777abbasbeloved](#)



Image: [@kyliejenner](#)



Image: [@sebiro_sanco](#)

TREND TRACKING



How some of the trends we've identified have evolved in recent months

A magic night



Image: [@thelullabyclub](#)

Ever been in the club and thought it would be vastly improved by the presence of a magician? Same, so you'll be glad to know magic continues its glittering comeback. As put by [The Cut](#), "Magic often resurfaces during moments of social uncertainty, offering audiences a temporary suspension of disbelief. Unlike past eras that produced star magicians, today's scene favours a decentralised network of freelancers who scale across nightlife, luxury brands and creative industries." Top tricksters rub shoulders with the [elite](#), go viral on [TikTok](#) and appear on gossip accounts like Deux Moi. In the past, New York even had an official [city magician](#) – a title we fully expect to be reinstated given the year we've all had.

Trend: WOW-mazement

Event-maxing



Image: [@mattstarrmattstarr](#)

According to [Eventbrite's](#) inaugural Social Study, 69% of respondents are searching for blended events that allow them to enjoy multiple interests at once – it's essentially hobby stacking. One such event called out by Emily Sundberg includes Matt Starr's recent and hugely successful Dream Baby Press [reading](#) in a Burger King – blending the literary world, Bravo fandom and fast food into one event that feels fresh from other book clubs happening right now. Some other interesting data includes an 82% uptick in anime raves and low-pressure connection: attendance at flower arranging events jumped 282% in the UK, puzzle competitions doubled in the US and silent discos continue growing. We're slowly getting back in touch with each other, but it's baby steps.

Trend: At your inconvenience

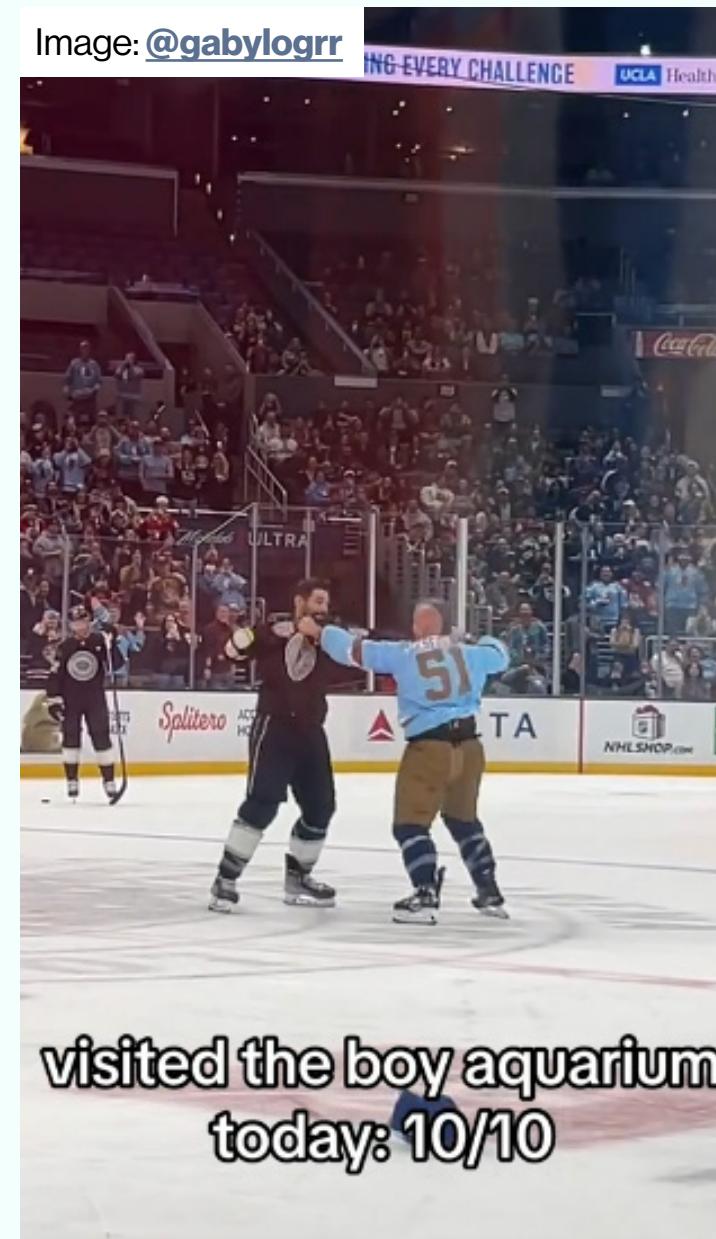
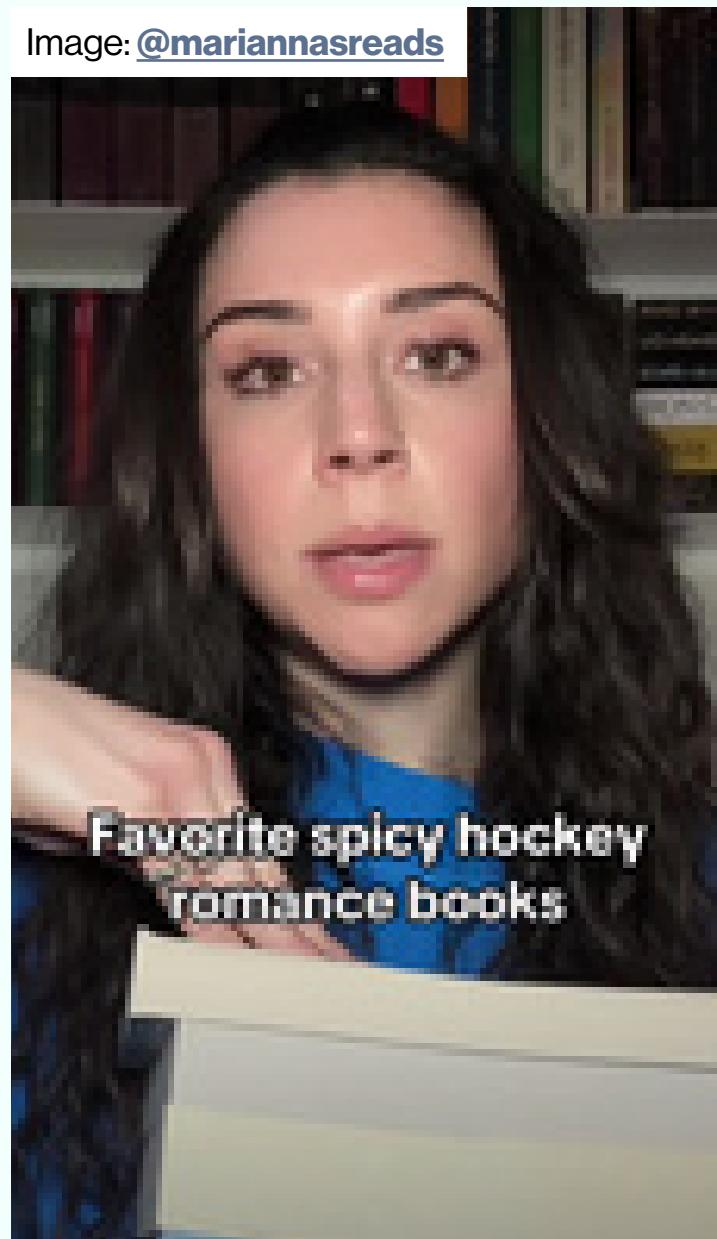
I'm so Angwy! („> u <„)



Image: [@hellokitty](#) [the](#)

Is the constant barrage of bad news and depressing content making you mad? Is the rise in anger correlating with the rise of cuteness? 2025 was the [year of rage bait](#) as well as the year of the Labubu. [From the NYT](#), "You could look at the population's turn to cuteness – not only as an aesthetic but as a way of life – as a trauma response: sublimated rage, learned helplessness, a numbing of the mind. Cute is the opiate of the people. But is this simply a retreat from the fray? Or has this embodiment of powerlessness become itself a kind of power?" Attaching a cute mascot to your bag is a sign of rebellion, to assert personality in a world of increasing sameness, to thumb the chin at evil. Pardon us as we go scream into our Hello Kitty pillows.

Trend: Cult of cute



Weber Forecast Insight

A gay ice hockey romance hit wasn't on our bingo cards – and it goes to show audience desires for fresh and unexpected characters and narratives – NYC's hottest club rn is a *Heated Rivalry* [watch party](#). It's a learning for brands tackling inclusivity or other purpose-led initiatives; progress lands better when it emerges from fandom rather than policy or press releases.



'Heated Rivalry': How A Gay Hockey Romance Became A Soft Power Masterclass

Image: [Forbes](#)



This week's long read

ICE HOCKEY CRACKS THE MAINSTREAM

It's about to get heated



ICYMI, ice hockey romance *Heated Rivalry* was the surprise streaming hit dominating pop culture discourse well beyond its niche at the tail end of 2025.

Although, for fans of the growing BookTok-driven, hockey romance category, perhaps it's not so surprising. The genre took off back in 2019 with Hannah Grace's *Icebreaker*. Part of its success lies in relatability. You're more likely to find love on the rink than you are with the faeries or demons in well-established romantasy tomes. Hockey is a romance author's dream – a whole team of potential characters to create lore around. To use industry parlance, the players are "cinnamon rolls" – boy next door, safe, fundamentally decent – reflecting Gen Z's [desire](#) for "wholesome" men.

It could be the reason behind the current "[boy aquarium](#)" trend, which sees mainly female fans flock to ice hockey games to lurk behind the glass and ogle the spectacle unfolding below, gladiator-style. Critics (and hockey bodies) say it's reductive, yet you can't argue with numbers, particularly in the UK. Overall attendance at British hockey games has [increased](#) by 75% since 2010, according to the EIHL and 45% of all attendees in 2025 were women. NHL TV is rumoured

to arrive in Britain this year, bringing with it a unique duality of high-octane drama – violence, strategy, skill – balanced with softer elements of ballerina-like grace.

Hockey fiction challenges an industry entrenched in a culture of silence. The popularity of *Heated Rivalry*, which focuses on a gay romance plot, tackles a paradox facing the "simultaneously welcoming yet exclusive sport" – the NHL has no openly gay players. According to [Forbes](#), it's "a masterclass in soft power... influence without coercion. It's how you change what people admire, normalise, or feel they can say out loud, not by forcing agreement, but by making a new narrative feel inevitable." This [take](#) on *Heated Rivalry*'s success says it much better than we can.

And this moment extends beyond BookTok and niche streaming hits. Ice hockey is poised to cut further into global culture, especially if the upcoming Winter Olympics capture attention the way Paris 2024 did. With its theatrical warm-ups, cinematic entrances, team camaraderie and raw physicality, hockey is a sport engineered for virality.

The ice, it seems, is finally cracking.

WANT TO KNOW WHAT ELSE IS ON THE HORIZON?

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Reports

Our '**Signals**' reports provide deep dive insights and implications for your brand, audience or category.

Workshops

Our own '**Culture Collider**' workshop methodology approaches briefs through the lens of cultural trends to help teams create culture first ideas.



Pictured: Unsplash

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FORECAST

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