

# School of Communication and Media

**MONTCLAIR**  
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## **The Super Bowl of Fatigue and Resentment: Social media shows 45% more negative sentiment about the Chiefs and a 67% decrease in interest in Taylor Swift**

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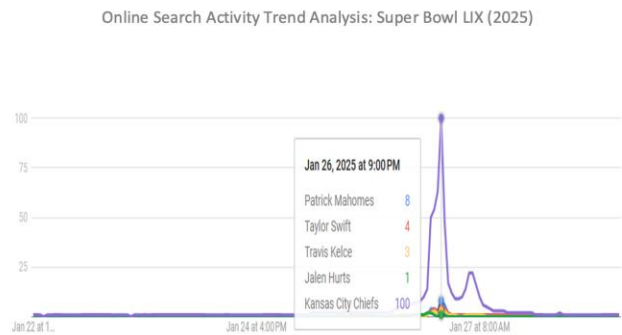
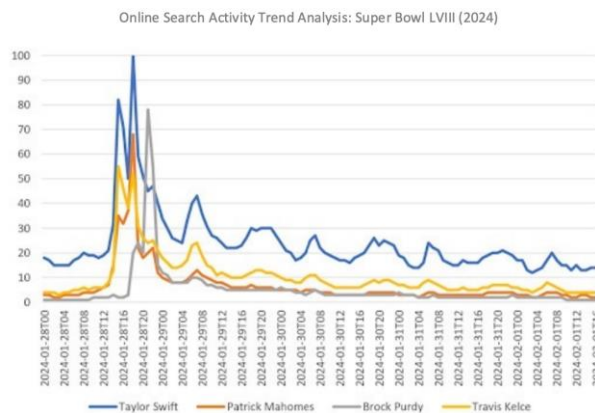
The Super Bowl, the National Football League's (NFL) Championship game, grabs international attention every year around February. It is considered a family-gathering holiday, as Table 1 presents it as fifth in holiday participation rating (Block & Emeritus, 2024).

Table 1: Seasonal Holiday Participation

	Percent
Christmas	93.4
4th of July	87.2
Mother's Day	84.0
Celebrate Easter	80.6
Watch Super Bowl	76.9
Father's Day	75.3
Halloween	73.1
Valentines Day	52.0
Chanukah/Hanukkah	6.8
Kwanzaa	3.3

This year, the Super Bowl is in New Orleans with the Kansas City Chiefs taking on the Philadelphia Eagles, a rematch from 2023. This is Kansas City's seventh Super Bowl appearance and the team is going for its third straight championship, commonly known as a "three-peat," which is a significant trademark (Hernandez, 2025). Yet, the public seems rather tired about this possible accomplishment, as the "low-end, get-in pricing for the Feb. 9 game hovered around \$4,600 per ticket...[, which] is down sharply from a comparable entry-level figure of more than

\$7,000 at this point before last year’s Super Bowl in Las Vegas,... and nearly \$6,000 for this same matchup two years ago” (Fisher, 2025). On the other hand, Forbes claimed that “Fifty-yard-line tickets to the Super Bowl are listed as high as \$56,000 on the secondary market...could be the priciest in NFL history.” (Kelleher, 2025) Super Bowl prices tend to fluctuate significantly towards the game day due to several factors, like the location and which teams make it to the Super Bowl. The Philadelphia Eagles also have a large fan base and rabid following, and Chiefs fans are eager to see the team make history. The prices are hard to estimate due to the fluctuation, but USA Today has also claimed that the prices are prospectively lower as last year’s Super Bowl was held in Las Vegas with countless celebrity participation, while New Orleans is a historically and culturally renowned town with many tourists Las Vegas has twice the population as well as more night-life attractions. (Mendoza, 2025)



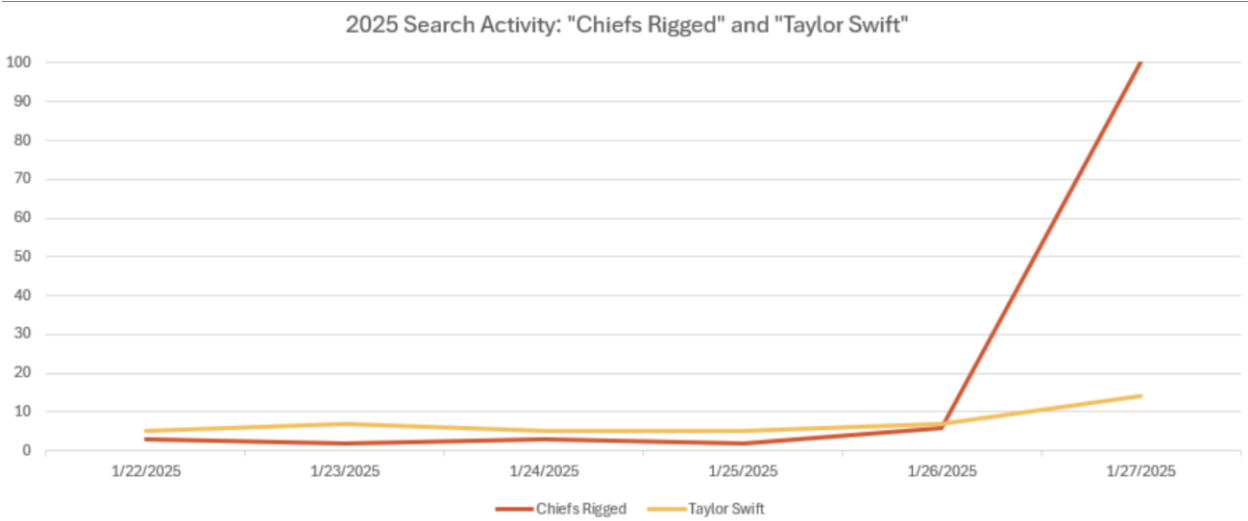
Unlike last year’s major focus on the influence of Taylor Swift in media attention for the Superbowl, this year’s trend reveals major attention on the Chiefs itself, with a prime focus on Patrick Mahomes rather than Taylor Swift.

As Patrick Mahomes is receiving intense public and media attention, there has been controversy as Adam Schefter, longtime NFL reporter and analyst, stated that perceived favoritism toward Mahomes could lead to replay rules changes next season. Commentator Tony Romo and Referee Clete Blakeman were the center of another controversy during the AFC title game. Romo experienced backlash from NFL fans with countless tweets about his biased commentating favoring the Chiefs, especially Mahomes, and even went as far as wanting him never to commentate on any more games. He has attacked Josh Allen, the Bills quarterback, saying that the quarterback has to “mitigate risk” and many other comments that raised ire from many fans as he was a former quarterback himself who did not necessarily minimize risk in his throws (Rancez, 2025). Commentators have the responsibility of maintaining a certain neutrality as speaking to the audience with the power to sway media reaction before, during, and after games, which also impacts the players and staff. Likewise, Clete Blakeman experienced backlash from the controversial decisions, especially in the 4th quarter, a crucial moment where the score was close; while it was certainly close to the first down marker, they overruled one another that it

was short and the football was turned over to the Chiefs, leading to their touchdown. This controversy heightened even more when Clete Blakeman did not speak to the reporters after the game, leaving an officiating pool report for an AFC game and the decision unanswered (Murphy, 2025). Yahoo Sports has also reported that “Chiefs "fatigue" is a real thing” as the Chiefs often win close games going 11-0 this season, while Mahomes make astonishing plays, fans of the opposing teams tend to believe that the game results are rigged and that “the NFL has no reason to secretly force the officials to swing calls toward Kansas City.” (Henson, 2025) Hence, such controversies anger the audience and fatigue the Super Bowl with an impression that the win of the Chiefs was not necessarily earned and was unfair due to biased decisions and media portrayal calling it ‘rigged,’ wearing on both players, leagues, and NFL fanbase. Social media attitudes related to the ‘rigged’ narrative are reflected in the myriad of memes advancing this conspiracy (which include numerous AI images and photoshops).



The narrative of ‘rigging’ also generated more search activity related to the Super Bowl at peak in comparison to searches related to global entertainment icon Taylor Swift and the big game.



Presence of the “rigged league” discourse was so prevalent that NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell felt the need to (jokingly) respond to it (Simpson, 2025).



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Goodell on officials favoring Chiefs: "This reminds me of the script that I write for entire season. A lot of those theories happen in social media and get a new life. No wants it to be their theory but it reflects the fans passions".

[@PFN365](#)

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### **Theories: The Menton Theory of Engagement and Boredom and Adaptation-level Theory**

This controversial Super Bowl LIX is perhaps met with mixed reactions primarily due to habituation. A certain level of boredom and familiarity may explain the diminishing emotional response to the frequently repeated appearance of the Kansas Chiefs, despite a potential monumental moment in the history of the NFL.

The Menton Theory of Engagement and Boredom introduces a unique aspect in analyzing Super Bowl fatigue as the theory suggests that utilization of menton, units of physiological research, leads to engagement and boredom. Thus, the theory claims that "boredom occurs when there is a surplus of unused mentons" (Davies & Fortney, 2012). In the case of the Super Bowl, due to the continuous success of the Kansas City Chiefs, the fans of both Chiefs, opposing teams, and the NFL in general may feel disengaged and experience boredom as it would be considered predictable. This lack of new or unexpected results leads to less use of cognitive and emotional engagement, primarily leaving 'unused' mentons, which then leads to boredom or dissatisfaction. The lower ticket prices may be one of the reflective factors of such impact, as well as the backlash against the commentary and officiating of the organization NFL itself. These incidents contribute to fans' desire for more fair or genuine competition that brings unpredictable results and their reluctance to engage with this year's Super Bowl.

The Adaptation-Level theory also contributes to the analysis of the cause of the Super Bowl fatigue. This theory suggests that individuals cater to their expectations based on previous experiences, and if such events continuously meet or exceed the expectations, the set goal or expectations are set higher, but when individuals experience repetitive and failing performance, dissatisfaction rises. This theory, in relation to job satisfaction and hedonic treadmill theory, similar to opponent-process theory, allows the analysis of fan and athlete responses to repetitive major events that eventually cause a lack of reward or feeling of happiness. The hedonic treadmill theory suggests that regardless of any huge failure or achievements, a rise and fall across baselines, individuals return to that baseline level, a 'normal' level of happiness. (Pilat & Sekoul, 2021) In the case of the Super Bowl, the big event is starting to feel unfulfilling and rewarding for many. For fans, especially long-time viewers, who may have experienced star-driven narratives for quarterbacks like Patrick Mahomes, previously Tom Brady, which may wear out the expectations of unpredictable outcomes. The first three-peat history may add excitement to the game, yet it still seemingly does not compensate for the lack of novelty of the game results as reflected by the angered fans at Chiefs victories and the lowering ticket prices.

Therefore, the repetitiveness of the Super Bowl results, despite the new emerging NFL historical record, may wear out the viewers, leading to fatigue in the Super Bowls significance and attention. Subsequently, the following research questions are explored in this study:

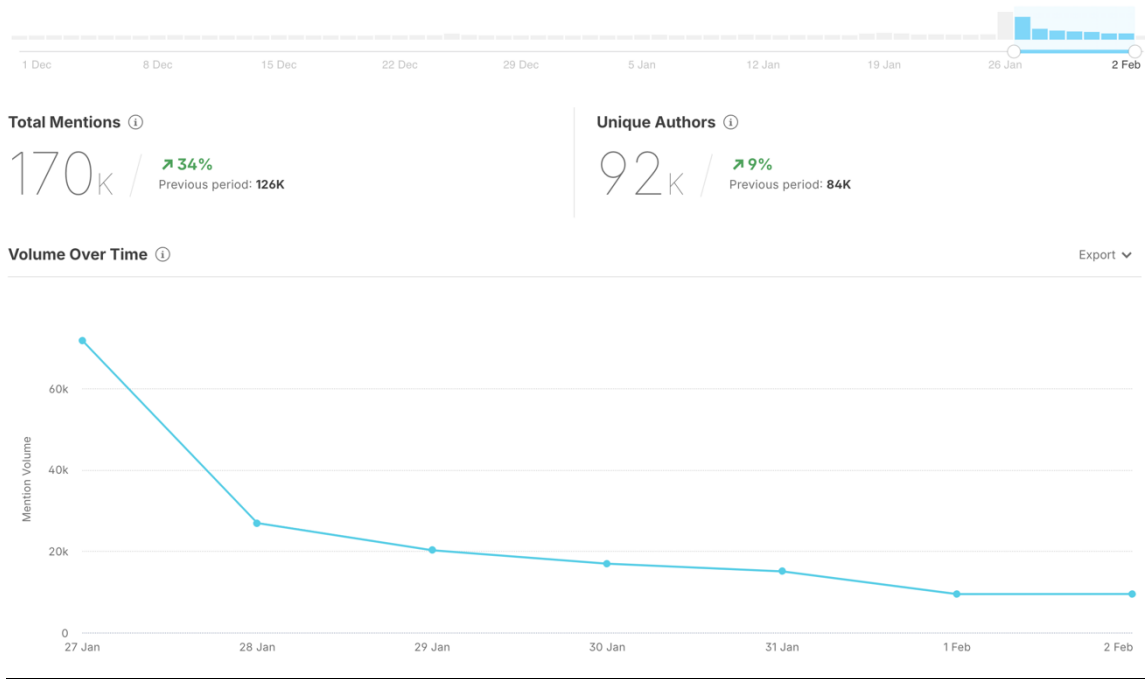
**RQ1:** Is "Chiefs Fatigue" displayed in the social media discourse around Super Bowl LIX?

**RQ 2:** Is Taylor Swift's linkage to the Super Bowl this year different from the Center's Study from the [previous year](#)?

## Method

To examine the social media discussions surrounding the Chiefs and Taylor Swift around Super Bowl LIX, this study used artificial intelligence (AI)-driven social media analytics tool, *Brandwatch*, to collect and analyze social conversations. To obtain a comprehensive view of social media users' discussions on the chosen topics, separate search queries were created on *Brandwatch* for data collection. Specifically, to collect social discussions related to the Chiefs and Super Bowl LIX, we used a set of key words such as "Chiefs" AND "Super bowl." Secondly, for Taylor Swift and Super Bowl 2025, we used a set of key words such as "Taylor Swift" AND "super bowl" and "Swift" AND "super bowl." The observation period of this study was set between January 27 to February 2, 2025.

## Overall Volume



The volume of social mentions surrounding the Chiefs and the Super Bowl was much less than anticipated. With a total of 170k mentions from 92k unique social media users, social media discussion decreased daily throughout the data collection period despite a 34% increase from the previous seven-day collection period. Prominent topics of conversations include the rematch between the Kansas City Chiefs and the Philadelphia Eagles. Named as the “Battle of the titans” in the NFL, the Chiefs try for the championship title and a historic three-peat. Star quarterback Patrick Mahomes is mentioned frequently as a powerhouse for the Chiefs with Jalen Hurts trailing behind for the Eagles. Still a week away from the game, more social conversations are anticipated as the days climb closer to the Super Bowl LIX on Sunday, February 9, 2025.

## **Sentiments**

Overall, the negative sentiment was 45% higher than that of positive sentiment for the Chiefs. As expected, mixed reactions from disgruntled fans stood out prominently suggesting conspiracy theories to dissatisfaction with the two teams involved. The anticipation for the game was overshadowed by skepticism and fatigue, mainly due to the integrity of the sport and biased officiating. The Kansas Chiefs faces scrutiny and accusations amidst the referee controversy in the Bills win and perceived favoritism towards the Chiefs. Having being “gifted” a Super Bowl spot, fans even called for boycotting the game. Regardless of the controversy fraught Super Bowl, positive sentiment reflects excitement and anticipation for a historic showdown for the NFL.

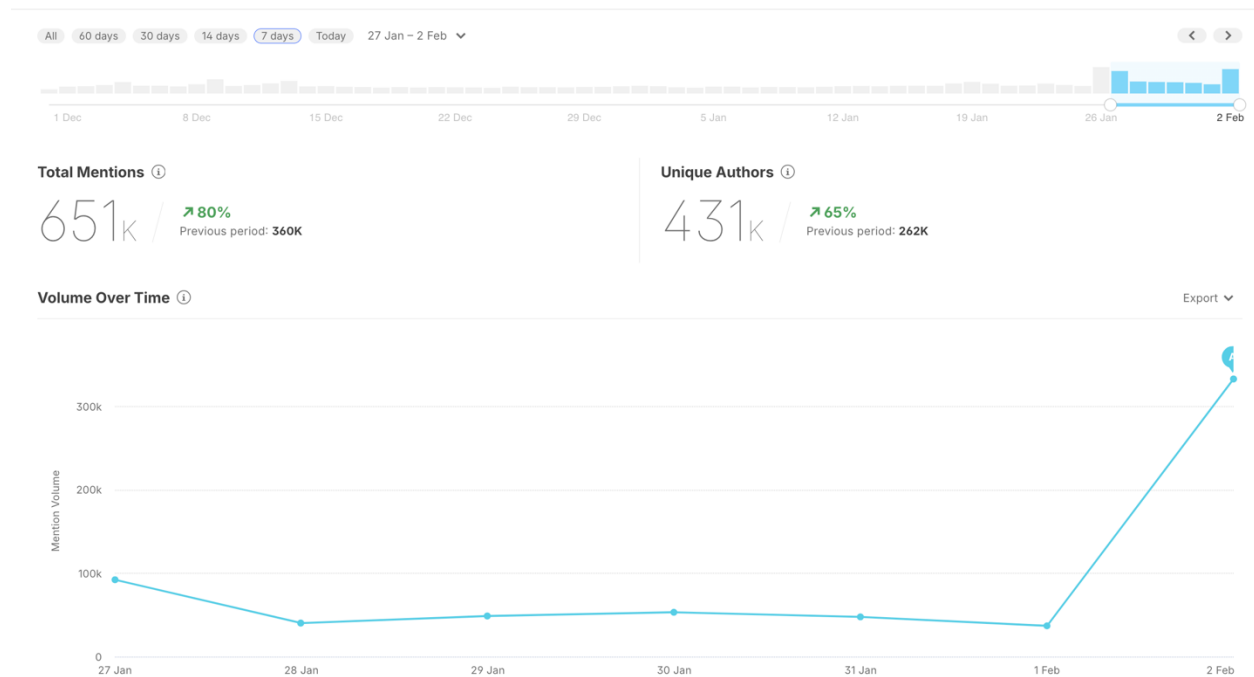
Specifically, frustration was found to be the dominant emotion at an astonishing 76%. Contentious feelings were expressed, with a mixture of anger, disgust, fear, resentment, hatred and even grief as deep-seated distrust and dissatisfaction were displayed among viewers. The ongoing debates and frustrations regarding officiating bias, perceived rigging, and the alleged controversial calls in favor of the Chiefs fuel fan discontent and conspiracy theories. Specifically, fans express frustration over perceived favoritism and questionable calls, fueling skepticism and calls for reform within the NFL officiating system. Much disappointment and disinterest are expressed along with lack of excitement and appeal in this particular matchup despite a potentially historic third consecutive Super Bowl win for the Chiefs. Due to skepticism and active calls for boycotting, there is reluctance to engage with the Super Bowl as displayed in the social discussions. Albeit predominantly criticisms, the ongoing debate between the Chiefs and the Eagles highlight the public’s emotional investment in this coming Super Bowl, captivating audiences and sparking continued discussions.

Although fatigue is heavily emphasized, fans also chose to celebrate the Chiefs’ success. Joy was expressed in 23% of the social media conversations. Despite differing opinions, the Chiefs’ consistent success in the NFL and potential three-peat in the Super Bowl evoke admiration and is anticipated to be a thrilling and memorable event for fans. With some fans eagerly awaiting the showdown, the anticipation and disappointment surrounding the Chiefs vs. Eagles Super Bowl matchup highlight a deep divide among fans. While some express disinterest and fatigue, others

find themselves reluctantly supporting one team over the other, revealing a mix of emotions and preferences leading up to the big game.

Even in the query for just Chiefs and the Super Bowl, social mentions of Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce were captured. Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce's relationship took center stage as they celebrated the Chiefs' AFC Championship win, sharing intimate media perfect moments as they shared kisses on the field. The impact of celebrity presence, particularly Taylor Swift, on the Super Bowl narrative and fan engagement is evident, sparking numerous discussions and reactions across social media platforms. Swift's association with the Chiefs and the game adds a unique dimension to the event, drawing both support and criticism. Taylor Swift's presence, [as noted in the center's study \(Luo et al., 2024\) from the previous year](#), at Chiefs games continues to spark discussions about her impact on the team's success, with statistics showing a high win rate when she attends. This unique connection between music and sports adds an intriguing element to the Chiefs' journey to the Super Bowl.

## Taylor Swift: Overall Volume



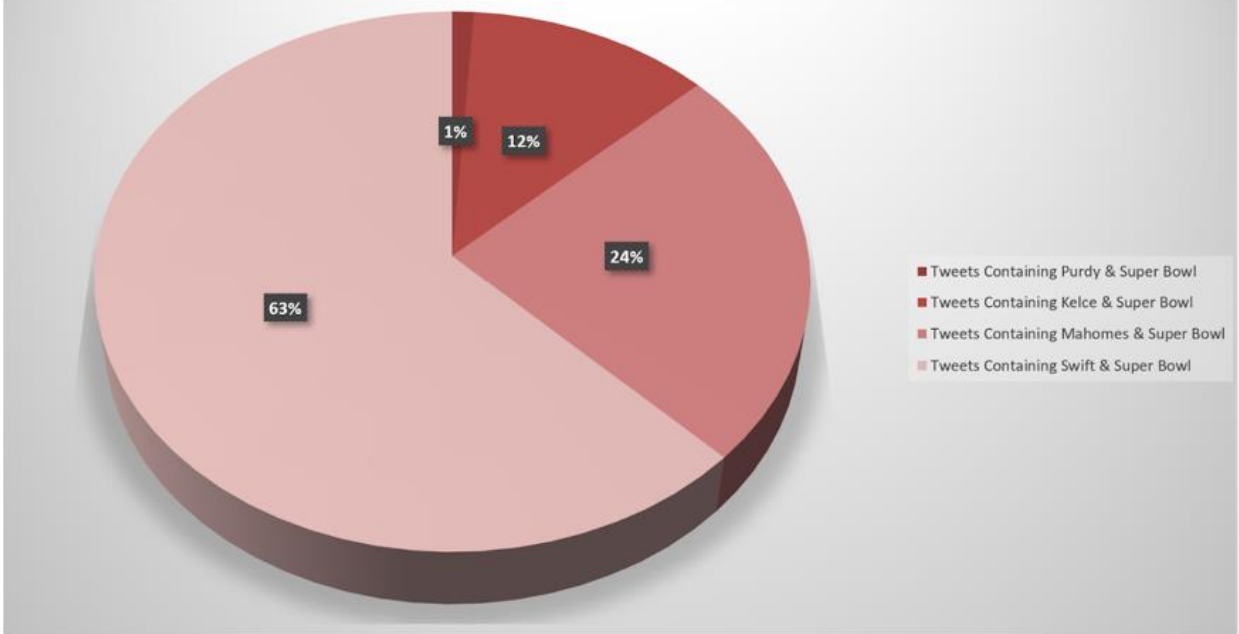
Between January 27 and February 2, 2025, the volume of social discussions surrounding Taylor Swift and Super Bowl LIX experienced a significant surge, increasing by 80%. However, this marked a sharp contrast to the same period in 2024 (January 28 – February 3), where discussions



related to Taylor Swift and the Super Bowl reached 2 million, a figure that has now decreased by 67%. As illustrated by the overall trend in online discussions, the conversation remained relatively steady throughout the observation period, with a notable spike emerging on February 2, just ahead of the Grammy Awards ceremony. This peak reflects the mounting anticipation among Taylor Swift’s fan base as they eagerly awaited her appearance at the prestigious music event. With six nominations and her confirmed role as a presenter, Swift’s Grammy presence generated a significant amount of buzz, with fans expressing their admiration for her continued success and artistry. Despite the decline in Super Bowl-related discussions, Taylor Swift’s impact in the music world remains undeniable. Her Grammy nominations and her confirmed appearance continued to captivate Swifties, reaffirming her influential position in the industry and underscoring her ability to command widespread attention.

Despite interest in Swift’s participation in the Grammy Awards, her role in online discourse in relation to Super Bowl LIX appears to be diminished in comparison to last year’s event. In 2024, online interest in Taylor Swift and the Super Bowl substantially eclipsed any of the players actually appearing in the game. A full 63% of Super Bowl mentions discussing a notable figure associated with the game were about Swift, with 24% containing Mahomes, 12% about her partner (and All-Pro Tight End) Travis Kelce, and only 1% discussing Brock Purdy (the opposing team’s quarterback). Swift mentions, in fact, represented a 52% difference from all players studied *combined*.

### 2024 Super Bowl Social Media Mention Results

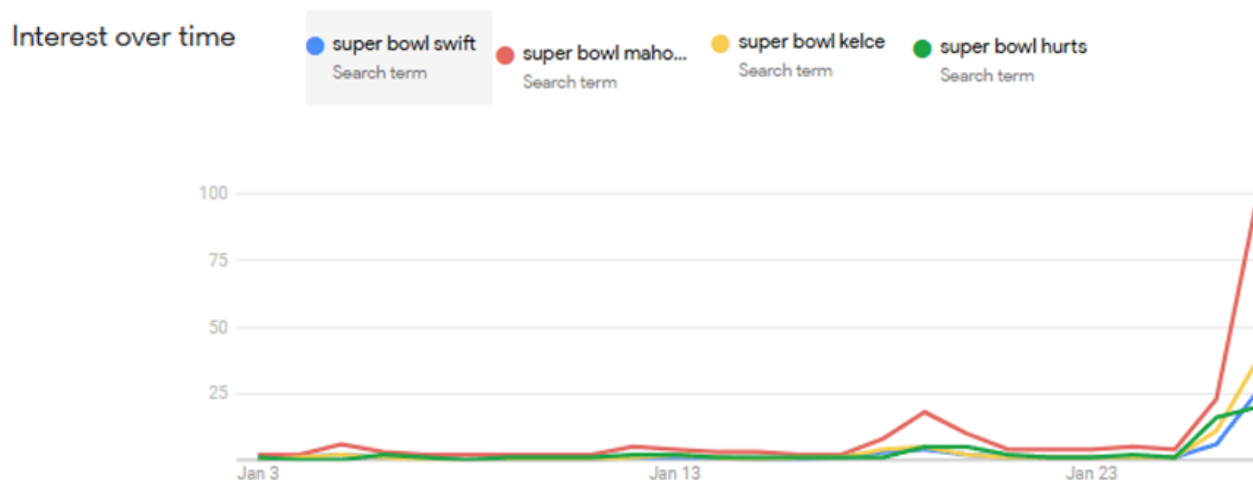


In contrast, Swift’s role in online discourse related to the Super Bowl has starkly declined with players associated with the game now appearing to generate more interest. To contextualize this change, a Google Trends Analysis was conducted. A key feature of a Google Trends Analysis is



that it allows for identification of items of interest for internet users (Nghiem et al., 2016). These analyses are “normalized to the highest volume of searches for that term over the time period being studied. This index ranges from 0 to 100, with 100 recorded on the date that saw the highest relative search volume activity for that term” (Arora et al., 2019, p. 338). Search interest in a specific topic has reliably forecast social media posts and actions related to that topic (McCarthy, 2010).

Results from Trend Analysis reflect the noted changes in online activity related to the 2025 Super Bowl. Data on January 27, 2025, the date on which the Eagles and Chiefs advanced to the game, showed the highest spike in search activity related to the Super Bowl in the period prior to the game.



Noteworthy is the share-of-search generated on the day of the activity spike: Mahomes generated a 100 share-of-search substantially eclipsing Swift’s 26. In apparent contrast to 2024, Kelce recorded a 36 with Jalen Hurts, the Eagles quarterback, generating a 20 share-of-search (only six points behind the Grammy winning songstress). Cumulatively, search activity, which typically forecasts and reflects social media activity (McCarthy, 2010), was 143% higher for the Super Bowl players studied than for Taylor Swift. Broadly, the data suggests that the intense interest in Swift for last year’s Super Bowl has appeared to dissipate for the 2025 Super Bowl.

## Sentiments

Love for Taylor Swift tends to dominate among social discussions with an impressive 72% joyful emotions expressed by social media users. Such overwhelming positive emotion serves as a strong testament of Swift’s enduring popularity and her dedicated fan base. Swifties felt that Taylor Swift’s award nominations across various categories have underscored her influence and power in the music industry. Particularly, Swift’s presence and involvement with the music industry’s most glamorous event has enhanced the allure of this event.

Interestingly, Taylor Swift’s romantic relationship with Kansas City Chief’s Travis Kelce continues to be a focal point, capturing interest and admiration among fans and the media.

Swifties touted the star's unwavering support for Travis Kelce and the Kansas City Chiefs and seemed enamored by the close bond, public displays of affection between Swift and Kelce. Taylor Swift's active support for Travis Kelce and the Kansas City Chiefs, including attending games and celebrating victories, showcases a strong bond between the couple. Their public displays of affection and joint celebrations have become a notable aspect of the Chiefs' success narrative. Their relationship adds a layer of intrigue and glamour to the sports scene, creating buzz and interest among fans and media. Particularly, Taylor Swift's presence at Travis Kelce's games and their shared celebrations symbolize a supportive and affectionate relationship. Their public displays of affection and joint appearances have added a unique dimension to the narrative surrounding the Kansas City Chiefs' journey to the Super Bowl. As the couple's relationship evolves, fans eagerly anticipate their next steps, including potential engagement rumors and shared public appearances. Their relationship brings a mix of music and sports together, adding a unique charm to the football world.

### **Conclusion**

Moments of mass cultural gathering can reveal broader sentiments about perceptions of an event. Cumulatively, this analysis would suggest that the consistent winning by the Chiefs may be contributing to broader resentment of the team. Ironically, in Patrick Mahomes's first year as a starter, he faced Tom Brady and the New England Patriots in the AFC Championship Game. At the time, widespread enthusiasm for a new face was reflected in fan support of the team. Now, however, this research would suggest the Chiefs face the same derision the Patriots previously received. Similarly, this research also reveals that the novelty of celebrity connection to the game may produce initial interest but is unlikely to endure. While Swift and her associated fandom remain popular, future studies should consider the longevity of cross-promotion in distinct cultural spaces. Even before the first play of the game, the 2025 Super Bowl has provided outcomes that beg consideration from fans, non-fans, critics, and scholars.

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