Print | Back to Article

ClickZ

Super Bowl 2012 Ads: 3 Trends to Watch

Anna Maria Virzi | What's the Buzz? | February 3, 2012

When friends invited me to their Super Bowl party in 2010, I didn't think twice about going. The Super Bowl ad campaigns back then were created for TV viewing. And because TV advertising had not been a core part of interactive advertising and marketing, I didn't see the need to work that night. Instead, I enjoyed the game and ads as an ordinary spectator - with my laptop and BlackBerry turned off.

A big shift occurred last year. People flocked to YouTube to watch and comment on the TV ads aired during the game. Case in point: Volkswagen's "The Force" ad, which was viewed 15 million times within 24 hours after the game. During the football game, viewers shared observations in a running commentary on Twitter, using hash tags such as #SB45.

So when a Super Bowl party invitation came this year, I regretfully declined. Following the Super Bowl ad campaigns offline and online today is mandatory for anyone in interactive marketing. And that requires keeping one eye on the TV and another eye on social networks and at least one mobile device. (Plus some salty snacks and a cold drink within arm's reach.)

In light of Super Bowl advertising's evolution, here are three trends to watch for this year:

Preview Ads: Too Much of a Good Thing?

Remember banner burnout back in 2002? Ten years later, will Super Bowl TV ads encounter a similar phenomenon well before the pre-game coin toss?

In this game of one-upmanship, Super Bowl advertisers have been previewing their Super Bowl ads on YouTube and Hulu well before the Feb. 5 football match.

Sure, creative ads are getting shared, tweeted, and liked, bringing the engagement brands crave on top of the TV exposure. But are advertisers giving away too much, too soon, making the Super Bowl of advertising an anti-climatic event? Possibly. Who hasn't seen the 10-second teaser and extended-length Honda CR-V ad with Matthew Broderick reprising his role as Ferris Bueller?

And what dog (or "Star Wars") lover has missed Volkswagen's "Bark Side" preview, featuring a chorus of canines barking out "The Imperial March," a.k.a Darth Vader's theme music.

One day this week, a search for tweets using the keywords "super bowl ads" turned up two comments criticizing the Super Bowl ad previews. "Seriously, is there a single Super Bowl ad that is not online already? Drop millions on a spot and then deaden its impact by debuting early," tweeted @Pat_JG. W. And @shawntalley complained: "Releasing EVERY Super Bowl ad early just gives non-sports fans less of a reason to watch/care."

While two negative tweets don't make a trend, it's a sentiment worth monitoring.

The Goal Posts for Success Have Changed

Getting a Super Bowl TV ad to go viral on YouTube was a big deal last year. While video view-counts remain a key indicator of an ad's popularity, marketers are under pressure to experiment with novel approaches to make their ads stand out from more than 70 others.



On CokePolarBowl.com, the soda brand's animated polar bear mascots will react in real time to the game. And they'll wear scarves to show their team allegiance: red for the Patriots, gray for the Giants. Pio Schunker, Coke's SVP for creative excellence, said the brand doesn't expect digital audiences to engage with the mascots for the entire game broadcast.

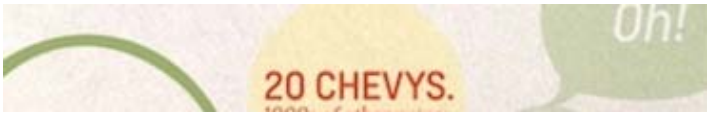
"At the very base level, we will look at tweets, retweets, how much the content is shared, the mentions. [They] are all things we are looking at in terms of reach and impressions…Though this is not about selling Cokes. It's about selling moments of thought," Schunker said.

Betting on Contests

Sports enthusiasts are typically competitive. And marketers are tapping into that affinity by incorporating contests and rewards into their ad campaigns.

Two examples:

- **Chevy's Game Time app**: Chevy's mobile app for iPhone and Android devices will feature trivia questions about the football game and commercials. Participants have a chance to win one of 20 Chevys and other prizes.





- **Disney's "John Carter" movie**: Marketers promoting the film are incorporating a contest into the Super Bowl ad. Viewers watching a teaser ad on Hulu are advised to look for "exclusive code" in the "John Carter" commercial that airs during the Super Bowl for a chance to win tickets to the 2013 game.

Looking Ahead

While no one can predict which ads will get the most attention on Sunday or deliver the best results for brands, four things are for sure.

This year's Super Bowl ad blitz will get dissected up and down and across channels more than ever before. Sentiment will be analyzed. Tweets will be counted. Video views will be tallied. Will marketers and ad technology vendors come up with a new metric to track?

While the Super Bowl ad blitz lacks the cachet of the Cannes Lions International Ad Festival or the hip vibe of SXSW, Sunday's ads showcase creative work that appeals to a broad cross-section of viewers in the United States.

And the 2012 Super Bowl ad campaigns will seem rudimentary compared to future years. Campaigns will be more interactive, personalized, and integrated across TV, mobile, and whatever other devices are available, promising more opportunities for brands to surprise, entertain, and inspire viewers.

And good storytelling will be as important as ever - regardless of what new technologies are available to marketers.

Print | Back to Article

Incisive Interactive Marketing LLC. 2012 All rights reserved. 55 Broad Street, 22nd Floor, New York, NY 10004