Predicting Super Bowl Ad Likeability in the New Millennium

Ashley Hofer, Clay Theiler, and Dan Rozumalski
Department of Marketing and Management  University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Abstract
U.S. advertisers love the Super Bowl because it reaches a huge and highly receptive audience. One metric Super Bowl advertisers watch closely is ad likeability, since this is correlated with sales success. This study is a replication and extension of the 2001 Tomkovick, Yelkur, and Christians research of Super Bowl ads in the 1990’s. We explored 488 ads from the nine Super Bowls during the years 2000-2008. Our findings show humor, animals, product category, product information and presence of children all significantly impacted ad likeability. Implications for advertisers are presented as are study limitations and directions for future research.

Hypothesis

H1: Humor  Positive relationship with ad likeability
H2: Animals  Positive relationship with ad likeability
H3: Food and Beverage (Product Category)  Positive relationship with ad likeability
H4: Advertisement Length  Positive relationship with ad likeability
H5: Celebrities  Positive relationship with ad likeability
H6: Product Information  Negative relationship with ad likeability
H7: Children  Positive relationship with ad likeability

Methodology

A panel of five undergraduate students created and validated a new instrument for operationalizing the variables.

The five students spent a combined total of 72 hours watching and coding the ads. Three of the panelists were women and two were men.

The panel watched and coded 488 Super Bowl commercials aired over a nine-year period (2000 to 2008).

The panelists coded for several characteristics of the commercials that are believed to impact ad likeability.

A regression analysis was then conducted to test the predictive power of the independent variables described above on ad likeability.

Significance of Variables in Super Bowl Commercials

Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Significance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertisement Length</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celebrities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product Information</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Of the seven variables, five significant independent variables explained nearly 47 percent of the variance in ad likeability. Humor was the most influential variable in the equation with a Beta Coefficient of .396, indicating that the use of humor has a significant positive impact on Super Bowl ad likeability.

As predicted, an inverse effect was detected. That is, the more product information in the ad, the less likable the ad is. Conversely, the less product information in the ad, the more likable the ad is.

The use of celebrities and ad length did not have significant predictive power to affect ad likeability.

Super Bowl Ad Likeability Model

Use of Humor in Ad +
Use of Animals in Ad +
Product Information -
Product Category +
Use of Children in Ad +

Future Research

While this study solidified the evidence of the correlation of several variables to ad likeability, more research may be performed to further explore the topic.

This study examined the Super Bowl ads from the years 2000-2008. Future research could also include analysis from prior years.

This study utilized the likeability measure based on the USA Today’s Ad Meter poll. Future research could examine other measures of ad popularity.

Additional research could determine whether the implications from this study hold true in future years and in a variety of contexts.

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