

# Consumer psychologist: Super Bowl ads might not be worth the cost

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Super Bowl commercials are overhyped and probably not worth the money spent on them, says Richard Feinberg, a consumer psychologist in Purdue University's Department of Consumer Sciences and Retailing.

An estimated 110 million people are expected to watch the Feb. 6 [Super Bowl](#). When they aren't watching the football matchup between the Green Bay Packers and Pittsburgh Steelers, they'll be bombarded by more than 100 commercials for everything from beer to clothing to cars. Thirty-second ads will cost between \$2.8 million and \$3 million.

The problem, Feinberg says, is that the \$3 million gets just one play of the commercial, and that one airing may not compel consumers to get off the couch and buy the product.

"Since repetition is the foundation of consumer memory, companies just might be better off with 10 \$300,000 commercials than one \$3 million commercial," he says.

Research suggests that many viewers like the ads as much as or more than the game itself, Feinberg says. While the extra attention further enhances the effect of a 30-second commercial, liking an ad doesn't necessarily lead to sales.

A study by Feinberg suggests that even if people watch the commercials, they have a limited impact on longer-term memory. And if consumers

cannot remember the companies or the products, the commercials do not lead to sales.

He asked 100 consumers who watched the 2010 Super Bowl to recall details from as many of the commercials as they could. About 30 percent could accurately recall at least one company with a commercial, but respondents had low confidence in their memory, indicating that they "thought" that the company had a commercial. Few could accurately recall details of the commercials.

Feinberg says the most effective Super Bowl commercials are connected to a range of social media, other advertisements and promotions. The use of animals, humor, special effects and celebrities increase memorability, but that alone does not mean an increase in sales, he says.

"Super Bowl commercials are celebrated for their creativity and humor, but that doesn't guarantee that [consumers](#) will become more aware of a product or make a purchase more likely than if the money had been spent in a less expensive but still effective way," Feinberg says.

Provided by Purdue University

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