

# Super bowl XLV ads -- don't expect much

February 2 2011

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John Antil

John Antil teaches marketing at the University of Delaware. He has devoted more than 20 years to researching Super Bowl advertising. He is currently completing a research project interviewing more than 50 executives from sponsor and non- sponsoring companies, media buyers, ad agencies, TV networks, and the NFL.

UDaily asked him for his thoughts on this year's game, [Super Bowl XLV](#).

## **You've dubbed Super Bowl XLV the “Auto Bowl.” Why?**

Antil: Auto products and services will be the most dominant category occupying about 30 percent of the ad time. Eight auto manufacturers as

well as Cars.com, CarMax and Bridgestone will vie for attention and try to capture the all-important buzz that should accompany Super Bowl [ads](#). Unfortunately, this category historically doesn't feed viewers' appetites for entertaining ads. The most popular measure of viewer perception, USA Today's AdMeter, rarely reports any auto ads among the most popular. Over the past 13 years, only two managed to break into the top 50. It has proven to be a creative challenge for auto companies to create ads that can both entertain and incorporate a brand-related message. However, there is always hope and based on recent experience, Audi is likely the one with the best hope of breaking the top 10.

## **What else can viewers expect?**

Disappointment. Along with auto ads, movie trailers are dominating. Together they will account for about half of the national ad time. Movie commercials fare poorly in viewer popularity. There are so many ads in both of these categories they become confusing and make it difficult to break through the clutter.

## **So, it might not be the most memorable roster of ads, but could it set other records?**

Absolutely. This year's most impressive record will likely be the largest number of viewers ever to watch a TV broadcast in the U.S. I estimate 160 million people, more than half of the population, will watch at least some of the Super Bowl. That is a major feat in an environment challenged by media fragmentation and is by far the only media event that can reach so many consumers in a single day.

## **Given that viewership, is it worth the “cost of admission” for advertisers? \$3 million for a 30 second**

## spot?

Consumer engagement is by far the most distinguishing feature contributing to the value of Super Bowl ads. It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of this. For as many as half of the viewers, the ads are equally, if not more, interesting than the game. This is the only program where the viewers actually want and look forward to seeing the ads. Commonly, viewers will rate the ads and talk about them during the broadcast -- resulting in a level of engagement nonexistent for other TV ads.

Essentially, you have more than 100,000,000 ad critics anxious to express opinions and dissect the ads. I liken it to the attention a naked person gets when standing on the stage in a crowded concert hall.

In addition, the Internet lets companies leverage the purchase, creating more interaction with the ads.

There are many less obvious benefits for Super Bowl sponsors. The festivities in Texas surrounding the Super Bowl are major networking events, including some of the year's most lavish and expensive parties. Entertaining key clients, retailers, dealers, sales people, etc. adds considerable value to many sponsors.

And, just having a Super Bowl ad provides added influence with retailers, resulting in preferred store placement and in-store promotions that might not been possible without the power of one of these ads.

In combination, most sponsors believe that these benefits lead to increased sales and have a total value that exceeds all costs. It is likely a surprise, but Super Bowl advertising is bargain priced for those who know how to leverage their buy.

Provided by University of Delaware

Citation: Super bowl XLV ads -- don't expect much (2011, February 2) retrieved 26 April 2024  
from <https://phys.org/news/2011-02-super-bowl-xlv-ads-.html>

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