

THE SUPER BOWL: IS SPENDING \$5 MILLION FOR 30 SECONDS
OF ADVERTISING SPACE WORTH IT?

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for Departmental Honors in
the Department of Marketing
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, Texas

May 2, 2016

THE SUPER BOWL: IS SPENDING \$5 MILLION FOR 30 SECONDS
OF ADVERTISING SPACE WORTH IT?

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ABSTRACT

The Super Bowl has continued to be a grandiose stage for brands as television viewership has stayed steadily over 100 million. For this reason, it's the perfect opportunity for brands to show why they should be chosen over their competitors. Unfortunately, to be put on this grandiose stage means offering up a hefty sum of money. Most recently, the price tag was placed at \$5 million for 30 seconds of advertising space. With cheap, new opportunities arising by the likes of social media and digital marketing, one can't help but raise the question: is it worth it to spend \$5 million for 30 seconds of advertising?

At the end of the day, there is no blanket statement or rule declaring whether it's worth it to spend money to advertise during the Super Bowl. It all comes down to perspective. Generally speaking, the Super Bowl is a great platform for brands to reach a large audience and increase awareness – whether for the brand as a whole or particular attributes of the brand. It also has become a status symbol showing that a brand is capable of advertising in the Super Bowl. Other than that, when taking into account the cost to produce and activate a television commercial, it's difficult to find any more respectable reasons to spend such a hefty price on 30 seconds, especially when there are multiple alternatives.

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INTRODUCTION

For the 30th year in a row, professional football is the most popular sport in the United States (Rovell, 2014). The margin wasn't as close as one might think, either. 35% of fans call American football their favorite sport followed by baseball coming in at 14% (Rovell, 2014). Additionally, the average attendance of a game in the National Football League is more than any other sport in the world, coming in 25,000 more fans per game than the next-highest league, the German Bundesliga (Gaines, 2015). To sum it up, the NFL has an incredibly large and loyal following. So, what happens when the most popular sport in the United States has to figure out which team is the best in the world? Well, it's this single game that's more commonly known as the Super Bowl and, each year over the last six, it also happens to be the most-watched TV program in the U.S. (Taibi, 2015). Because of its massive viewership, the Super Bowl has become the *crème de la crème* when it comes to advertising space for brands and advertisers everywhere.

As the most viewed program in the U.S., the Super Bowl has strayed away from being just another sporting event – it's its own market. From 2005 through 2014, the Super Bowl generated \$2.19 billion in network advertising sales from more than 130 marketers, making it one of the most valuable franchises in the U.S. (Kantar, 2015). That number is already climbing as the rate for advertising slots continues to increase. Looking at the past decade, the average price for a 30-second advertisement in the Super Bowl has increased by 75%, reaching \$5 million in 2016 (Grodin, 2015). Although the price continues to increase, brands and advertisers of all sizes aren't hesitating to buy pieces of this prime marketing real estate. As a

matter of fact, in 2014, six Super Bowl advertisers put more than 10% of their full-year media budgets into the game (Kantar, 2015).

Regarding viewership of the Super Bowl in relation to the advertisements, the correlation between audience levels and ad exposure (Ibrahim, 2015), consumer behavior with social media throughout the game (Burson-Marsteller, 2014), and the consumer's overall perception of Super Bowl advertisements (Reynolds, 2015) have been studied in prior research. As for digital activity in relation to the Super Bowl, the correlation between Super Bowl ads and app downloads (Michaeli, 2015), online viewing of campaigns on Facebook and YouTube (Russell, 2015), and the effectiveness that Super Bowl ads have on annual digital activity (Hartmann & Klapper, 2014) have also been studied in prior research. However, as a whole, research has only tackled industry and company trends in ad spending with the Super Bowl (Canipe, 2015) and the locations of digital conversations revolving around the Super Bowl (MarketingCharts, 2015). Unfortunately, there is little research on the return, both social and monetary, that actually comes from ad spending and digital conversations that happen in the Super Bowl atmosphere.

This research will examine Super Bowl spending and marketing strategies in an effort to figure out whether \$5 million for a 30-second spot is worth the investment. The Super Bowl is the most viewed event in the United States, garnering 114.4 million viewers in Super Bowl XLIX (Taibi, 2015). With such large viewership, the Super Bowl can be considered the perfect marketing platform for many advertisers in the U.S. What remains to be unanswered is whether or not there is an effective strategy when it comes to marketing with the Super Bowl. Because of the multitude of companies that choose to purchase ad space during the Super Bowl,

advertisers between industries are continually looking for ways to differentiate themselves and utilize all channels that draw viewership during the Super Bowl. When there are large companies who can afford to spend tens of millions of dollars on a single event, smaller companies with lower budgets have to figure out how to be creative and use the Super Bowl to their advantage. With most companies beginning to take advantage of social media platforms during the Super Bowl, questions remain about return on social media impressions and engagement. With my research, I hope to find the strategies used by companies to take advantage of the largest marketing platform in the United States. This, along with finding how brands measure return on social media engagement and what alternative strategies brands could utilize with \$5 million, will allow to answer the simple question: Is spending \$5 million for a Super Bowl ad worth it?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ambush Marketing

The idea of ambush marketing is relatively new without a firm definition. Although it has been described as “an attempt by a brand owner to associate itself either directly or indirectly with an event, or celebrity, or team without their sanction, without paying the usual licensing fees or sponsorship money” (Palomba, 2011), it is consistently placed side-by-side with a more well-known idea, guerilla marketing. The biggest difference that distinguishes the two is that ambush marketing is accused of “potentially depriving the official sponsors of commercial value derived from their official sponsor designation” (Palomba, 2011). On the other hand, guerrilla marketing is a “strategy of targeting small and specialized customer groups in such a way that bigger companies will not find it worthwhile to retaliate” (*Ambush Marketing Case Study*, 2010). In other words, ambush marketing has a negative connotation that causes it to be deemed as less professional and less credible than guerrilla marketing.

Types of Ambush Marketing

Although ambush marketing is vague in nature, research shows that ambush marketing has four distinctly separate strategies: program sponsoring, support of event participants, event used as a central theme for advertising, and advertising in the geographical surround of an event (Wolfsteiner et al, 2015).

Program sponsoring creates an association with the event through the media covering the broadcast of the event. The ambush marketer operates in the media context of an event and pays a rights fee to the broadcast company but not the event (Crompton, 2004). McKelvey

(2006) views program sponsoring as one of the most common and effective forms of ambush marketing as it is seen as a common tactic used in the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics. Examples of program sponsoring appear in early research on ambush marketing and remain relevant today. The first reported ambush marketing attempt dates back to 1984 when Kodak became the sponsor of ABC's broadcast of the Summer Olympic Games. With this particular campaign, Kodak successfully ambushed Fuji, the official sponsor of the games (Sandler & Shani, 1989). In addition, in the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, Bitburger (a German brewery) was the program sponsor of more than 20 soccer matches on German television. With this investment, the company was hoping to reach a large audience of soccer fans which, in turn, would attract attention away from the event's official sponsor, Budweiser (Wolfsteiner et al., 2015).

The support of event participants offers substantial opportunities to access consumers who are already aware of the event. This particular strategy of ambush marketing is embedded within the event, making it particularly effective because there tends to be confusion about the official sponsor of the event as a whole (Portlock & Rose, 2009). This tactic is also constantly seen in global events such as the European Soccer Championships and the Olympics. For example, at the 1992 Winter Olympic Games, Wendy's appeared to be the official fast-food sponsor of the event because of an impressive advertising campaign that featured U.S. figure skater Kristi Yamaguchi (Meenaghan, 1996). In addition, at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Linford Christie wore contact lenses with the Puma logo at a press conference, despite Reebok being the official sponsor (Portlock & Rose, 2009).

Using an event as a central theme for advertising is when the ambush marketer creates a thematic connection with the event through visual or terminological event-related references in traditional advertising or at the point of sale (Carrillat et al., 2014). All of the symbols, themes, and/or images used by the ambush marketer do not carry a direct reference to the event but they are sufficient enough to create an indirect, more subtle association with the event (Crompton, 2004; Portlock & Rose, 2009). With such wide-scale events like the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, it's not uncommon to see ambush marketers use these events as a central theme for advertising campaigns. For example, at the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London, ambush marketer Nike gained attention with its "Find Your Greatness" campaign, which focused on athletic greatness taking place in other "Londons" around the world to demonstrate the idea that athleticism is not restricted to the Olympics (*Guardian*, 2012).

Advertising in the geographical surround of an event is a way which ambush marketers use the mere presence of a company in the vicinity of the event to create a strong association with the event. Traditional or themed advertising geographically close to an event often leads to outdoor saturation of ambush marketing activities at the physical location (Mazodier et al., 2012). For example, during the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, which Adidas was the official sponsor, Nike put up an interactive installation on the fourth-tallest building in Johannesburg in order to avoid the advertising ban placed around the stadium (Wolfsteiner et al., 2015).

Drivers of Ambush Marketing

In addition to the four types of ambush marketing, Wolfsteiner et al. (2015) discovered that there are three general drivers of ambush marketing: event involvement, ambusher-event fit, and ambusher prominence.

Involvement indicates increased relevance of an object and is reflected in greater knowledge of a domain, such as a sport, and/or a heightened level of enthusiasm for a property, such as a sports event (Lardinois & Derbaix, 2011). Event involvement is “distinct from fan identification, which is based on an individual’s personal commitment to, perceived connectedness with, and self-categorization as a fan of a sports team, resulting in attributional biases toward his or her own team (in-group) and against opposing teams (out-group)” (Wann & Dolan, 1994).

Event fit describes the degree of perceived similarity between a company and an event (Gwinner, 1997). Perceived fit can be based on functional and/or image characteristics of the sponsor and the event (Gwinner, 1997) or can be created through communication activities (Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006).

Similar to the way in which companies fit an event, sponsor identification can be guided by company prominence. If consumers are not able to directly recall the official sponsor from memory, they tend to rely on the relative market prominence of companies and use cues to reconstruct the official sponsors of the event. In other words, consumers tend to assume that prominent companies are more likely to pay high sponsorship fees (Johar & Pham, 1999). In

addition, companies perceived as more prominent are more accessible in memory, which facilitates sponsor identification (Pham & Johar, 2001).

Events and Ambush Marketing

As previously mentioned, the Olympics, the FIFA World Cup, and any other events on a global scale are subject to forms of ambush marketing. One of the first major instances of ambush marketing in a global event was the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona which were sponsored by Reebok. During the games, basketball athletes Michael Jordan and Charles Barkley covered the Reebok logo on their tracksuits with carefully draped American flags when they stepped on the podium to receive their medals. Both players coincidentally had individual sponsorship arrangements with Nike causing an uproar. This tactic came to be known as intrusion, placing one's trademarks or other indicia in event spaces where they will be captured by television cameras or seen by those attending the event (Scassa, 2011).

The 2006 FIFA World Cup was another victim of ambush marketing. In fact, there were reports of 3,300 rights infringements spread across 84 countries (Palomba, 2011). One event in particular stood out among the others to the point that FIFA had to take action. A Dutch brewery, Bavaria, supplied orange lederhosen to fans before a match in support of the Dutch team. FIFA took the view that this was unauthorized promotional activity and could confuse consumers into thinking that the brand was an official sponsor although Budweiser was the event sponsor. FIFA asked the fans to remove the lederhosen before entering the stadium. The sight of over 1,000 Dutch fans cheering their team to victory in their underwear ultimately generated more press and television coverage than Bavaria could have ever hoped for. At the

end of the day, the brewery achieved its goal of increasing exposure of Bavaria's trademark without having to pay official sponsorship fees (Palomba, 2011).

Legal Issues and Arguments against Ambush Marketing

These examples have caused worldwide brands to raise arguments and even take legal action against those who use ambush marketing tactics. For example, the Olympic Games symbols are themselves one of the most protected brands in the world. The logo is protected by two separate Acts of Parliament: the Olympic Symbol (Protection) Act of 1995 (better known as the 1995 Act) and the London Olympics Act of 2005 (better known as the 2005 Act). The trademark rights belong to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), but are enforced in the UK by the British Olympic Association (Palomba, 2011). The London Olympics Association Right (LOAR) was introduced to try and stop some of the unofficial activities seen at previous Olympic Games. It means that no business can associate itself with the Olympic Games unless it is an official sponsor or it has the sanction of the London Organizing Committee of the Olympics (LOCOG). The 2005 Act sets out a list of certain words, used in some cases by themselves and others in combination with other words, which should be taken into account by courts as suggestive of an association (Palomba, 2011).

In addition to some legalities surrounding ambush marketing in particular events around the world, many arguments arise that lead to the consideration of anti-ambush marketing legislation. One of these primary arguments for such legislation is that the event organizers own any goodwill in the event, and they alone should control the rights of other entities to associate themselves with it. Any unpaid association is an appropriation of this goodwill

(O'Sullivan & Murphy, 1998). In addition, there's an issue that trademark law protects against the illegitimate or confusing use of trademarks, but ambush marketers strategically avoid using the trademarks of others in an infringing manner (Scassa, 2011). Unfortunately, it's difficult to prove ambush marketing illegal because of the vague interpretation of the law. For example, the tort of passing off, because it focuses on a misrepresentation that is likely to lead to confusion, has been relied upon heavily, but it is also problematic because confusion is difficult to establish in ambush marketing cases (Scassa, 2011). The ambush marketer tends to defend themselves by saying that they are not trying to pass off their good/service as those of a competitor, and there is no confusion as to the source in this respect. Any confusion will be as to the ambusher's status as a commercial sponsor of the event, yet it is much more difficult to establish confusion in this regard (Scassa, 2011). In addition, actions for false or misleading advertising have not been of much use, in large part because it is difficult to demonstrate that consumers are being misled in any way that is material to their own interests (Scassa, 2011). At the end of the day, only a small portion of ambush marketing conduct actually crosses the lines of unfair competition as stated by law.

Consumer Knowledge and Perception of Ambush Marketers

Due to the gray area that comes with ambush marketing in advertising spaces, it's difficult for consumers to identify which companies are official sponsors of events and which are using ambush marketing tactics. Although the advertising world has differing opinions on the ethics and legality behind ambush marketing, the only thing that matters is the knowledge and perception of ambush marketing to the end consumer.

Investigations into how consumers view the practice of ambush marketing are inconsistent in terms of what they say about how consumers feel. On one hand, in 1996, only half of consumers surveyed felt that ambush marketing was unethical and a lesser number were 'annoyed' by it (Shani & Sandler, 1998). Similarly, in 2001, research conducted on the Super Bowl provided similar findings that 51% of respondents agreed with the statement that "non-sponsors should not lead consumers to believe that they are official sponsors" and only 38% believed that "associating with the Super Bowl without being an official sponsor is unethical" (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001; Portlock & Rose, 2009).

However, by 2005, Olympic research had found that 88% of respondents were unaware of any company trying to represent itself as an official sponsor when it was not. Furthermore, nearly 50% agreed that "it was not fair for companies to associate themselves with the Olympics without being an Olympic sponsor," 43% considered ambush marketing "unethical" and only 36% were annoyed by it (Seguin et al, 2005; Portlock & Rose, 2009). Unfortunately, while many respondents considered ambush marketing tactics "unacceptable, unethical, and [were] confused by sponsorship clutter", they were unaware of the application (Portlock & Rose, 2009).

The main issue that brands have when it comes to ambush marketing is that ambush marketing is most effective if consumers are not well informed about official sponsorship rights and different ambush marketing strategies (Shani & Sandler, 1998). Unfortunately, official sponsors and event organizers cannot rely on informing and educating consumers about the sponsorship rights and ambush marketing activities of each individual event (Wolfsteiner et al, 2015).

Advertising in the Super Bowl

As mentioned in the introduction, the Super Bowl is the prime medium for brands and marketers when looking at sheer numbers. The Super Bowl has been the top televised event, year over year, for the last six years, reaching a viewer base of 114.4 million in the Super Bowl in February 2015 (Taibi, 2015). With the number of viewers continually increasing, so does the demand for advertising within the rights and scope of the Super Bowl. Unfortunately, with the rising popularity of using the Super Bowl as an advertising platform, brands have to change their approach in how they use the Super Bowl due to the increase in ad saturation, the change of consumer perceptions of the Super Bowl and its advertisements, and the rising prices of using the Super Bowl as a medium.

Analysis of Historical Spending

Advertisement spending in the Super Bowl can be broken down and analyzed by industry and, furthermore, by brand. Over the past four years, the automotive industry has led the Super Bowl in spending tallying \$117.6 million in 2014, \$96 million in 2013, \$101.5 million in 2012, and \$83.7 million in 2011. Breaking it down even further in the automotive industry, Chrysler, Volkswagen, GM, Toyota, and Hyundai have been the most consistent spenders. In 2014, Chrysler led the group spending \$37.8 million while Volkswagen, GM, and Toyota followed closely behind spending \$16.8 million, \$16.8 million, and \$8.4 million, respectively. In 2013, Chrysler led the group again spending \$32 million. Hyundai, Volkswagen, and Toyota trailed Chrysler in their Super Bowl budget by spending \$20 million, \$16 million, and \$8 million,

respectively. Then, in 2012, GM led in spending at \$21 million while Volkswagen, Hyundai, and Chrysler trailed behind all at \$14 million (Canipe, 2015).

The next highest spending industry over the past four years has been the beverage category. As a whole, the beverage industry has spent \$67.2 million in 2014, \$68 million in 2013, and \$63 million in 2012. Unlike the automotive industry, there have been only three major players to spend money on Super Bowl ads over the past few years. Anheuser-Busch InBev has consistently been the industry leader in Super Bowl spending as they have contributed over \$30 million of their budget per year to the Super Bowl (\$33.6 million in 2014, \$36 million in 2013, and \$31.5 million in 2012). Following AB-InBev, Coca-Cola Co. and PepsiCo have traded off in which brand outspends the other. In 2014, Coca-Cola Co. topped PepsiCo by spending \$16.8 million in comparison to PepsiCo's \$12.6 million. In 2013, PepsiCo spent \$16 million while Coca-Cola Co. spent only \$12 million. And, in 2012, PepsiCo outspent Coca-Cola Co. by \$3.5 million as PepsiCo spent \$17.5 million while Coca-Cola Co. spent \$14 million (Canipe, 2015).

Following the automotive and beverages industry, several industry sectors have shifted as to who takes the number three spot when it comes to Super Bowl spending. In 2014, the technology sector came in third at \$50.4 million while the food/restaurant, internet, and apparel/consumer products industries followed at \$39.9 million, \$16.8 million, and \$16.8 million, respectively. As for 2013, the food/restaurant industry took the third place spot while the apparel/consumer products, media/entertainment, and technology industries brought up the rear (Canipe, 2015).

When looking at lesser spending industries, there are some trends in companies that tend to spend more as a whole and allocate a large budget towards the Super Bowl. For example, in the technology sector, Samsung Group, Sony, and Microsoft have been consistent spenders. As for the food/restaurant industry, Mars, Chobani, and Yum Brands have been the most reoccurring spenders. And, when looking at the internet sector, GoDaddy.com has been the sole consistent spender (Canipe, 2015).

As of early January, for Super Bowl 50 coming on February 7, 2016, the full list of marketers is as follows: Acura, Buick, Honda, Hyundai, Kia, MINI USA, Toyota, WeatherTech, Avocados From Mexico, Bai, Budweiser, Bud Light, Shock Top, Butterfinger, Doritos, Kraft Heinz, Mountain Dew, Pepsi, Skittles, Snickers, Taco Bell, Pokémon, Intuit, SoFi, SunTrust Banks, TurboTax, Quicken Loans, Amazon, Apartments.com, Squarespace, Wix, Axe, Colgate, Persil ProClean, Marmot, LG Electronics, PayPal, T-Mobile, and the NFL. This compiled list also includes the amount of ad space that each company purchased for the Super Bowl. (*Ad Age*, 2015).

Ad Saturation in the Super Bowl

Due to the simple fact that the Super Bowl is the most watched television event in the United States, demand for any brand recognition tied to the Super Bowl has unceasingly increased. Because of this, Super Bowl advertising rates and the total ad spending of the Super Bowl as a whole have increased since 2010. To be exact, in 2010, the average cost for a 30 second spot in the Super Bowl was approximately \$2.97 million dollars which totaled to \$205.2 million in total ad spending. In 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014, the average cost of a 30 second

spot was approximately \$3.1 million, \$3.5 million, \$4 million, and \$4.2 million, respectively. As for the total ad spend in these years, the totals amounted to \$227.9 million, \$262.5 million, \$292 million, and \$331.8 million, respectively (Kantar Media, 2015). As for 2015, and 2016, a 30 second spot for an advertisement cost \$4.5 million and \$5 million, respectively (Grodén, 2015).

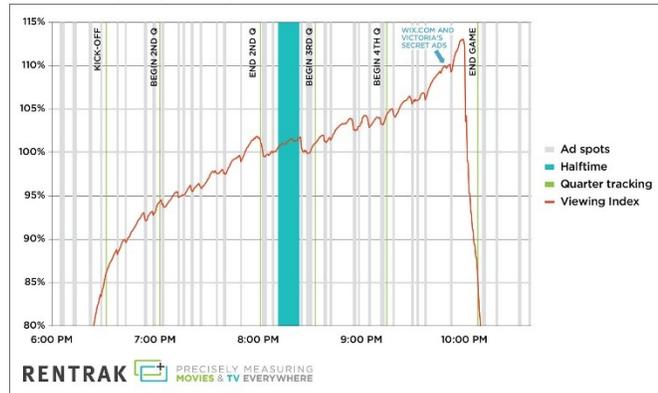
In correlation with the demand of advertising space in the Super Bowl, the supply of advertising slots has also increased. From 2010 to 2014, the amount of ad time increased by 3%. Although the length of time for ads has increased, the number of commercials has actually decreased from 104 to 83 over that same period of time. This is because, despite the high cost of air time in the Super Bowl, a significant proportion of advertisers opt to spend more by running longer length commercials. This is done in an effort to tell a deeper story and further engage viewers. In fact, 40% of the paid ads in 2014 were 60 seconds or longer, the highest share since 1984 (Kantar Media, 2015).

In addition to both ad supply and demand, ad saturation, when broken down by brands per industry, has also increased. When looking at ad spots bought by auto manufacturers, motion pictures, and food/restaurant from 2010 to 2014, the number of parent company advertisers has increased. In 2010, there were 4 parent company advertisers that were auto manufacturers, 3 motion picture advertisers, and 1 food/restaurant advertiser. In 2014, there were 9 parent company auto manufacturers, 3 motion pictures, and 7 food/restaurant (Kantar Media).

Viewership of the Super Bowl

Although ads thoroughly saturate the Super Bowl, ad exposure was nearly equal to viewership during the entire game in the Super Bowl played by the Seattle Seahawks and the New England Patriots (Ibrahim, 2015).

As seen in the image on the right, audience levels rose during the tight contest of the game, which ended up coming down to the final seconds on the



ending drive. Because of the outcome of the game, the most-watched advertisements were Wix and Victoria's Secret which just so happened to run right before the Seattle Seahawk's final drive. As a whole, it's clear that there was a steady increase in ad retention as the game went which was due to the increasing competitiveness of the game. Interestingly enough, the section highlighted in blue representing the halftime show didn't have any astronomical increase in ad retention (Ibrahim, 2015).

Consumer Perceptions of Super Bowl and Advertisements

When it comes to the day of the Super Bowl, consumers dedicate the entire day to focus on the big game. Nearly half of viewers (46.8%) say that the game itself is the most important part of the day (Reynolds, 2015). When it comes to reasons for watching the Super Bowl, consumers' purposes are changing year over year. In 2014, a study done by Burson-Marsteller showed that 52% of respondents said that the primary reason they tune in is to watch the game, compared to 23% who are focused on the commercials (When It Comes To The Super

Bowl..., 2014). One year later, nearly one-third (41.3%) of those planning to watch the game say that the most important parts for them are the commercials and hanging out with friends and family. Additionally, a record 11.9% of viewers this year said that the most important part of the Super Bowl is the halftime show. Breaking it down by demographics, approximately one in five (22.8%) 18-to-24-year-olds say the most important part of the game is the commercials, the highest of any other age group (Reynolds, 2015).

91% of respondents said they are more excited to view ads that use humor than ones designated to elicit an emotional response. And, they're slightly more likely (55%) to post on social media about a commercial as they are a big play during the game (51%). In addition, 57% said they will be using Facebook and/or Twitter during the game, and 55% will go online to view additional branded content either during or immediately after the game (When It Comes To The Super Bowl..., 2014).

While more than three-quarters (77.1%) of viewers say they look at Super Bowl commercials as entertainment, others (20.1%) feel that the commercials make them more aware of the advertiser's brand. For those who do not have favorable opinions of the commercials, many (16.6%) think advertisers should save their money and pass the savings along to the consumers while 9.7% say the commercials make the game last too long (Reynolds, 2015).

Super Bowl Marketing Strategies

As time has passed and the way in which people consume media has changed, marketers have altered their marketing strategies when it comes to utilizing the Super Bowl on

multiple media channels. Originally, marketers would utilize only particular traditional channels to advertise with the Super Bowl. Then, marketers began using multiple traditional avenues hand-in-hand to take advantage of a more all-encompassing marketing mix. It wasn't until recently that social media channels were added into the mix in order to truly take advantage of all sources of media to engage with consumers.

Traditional + Social

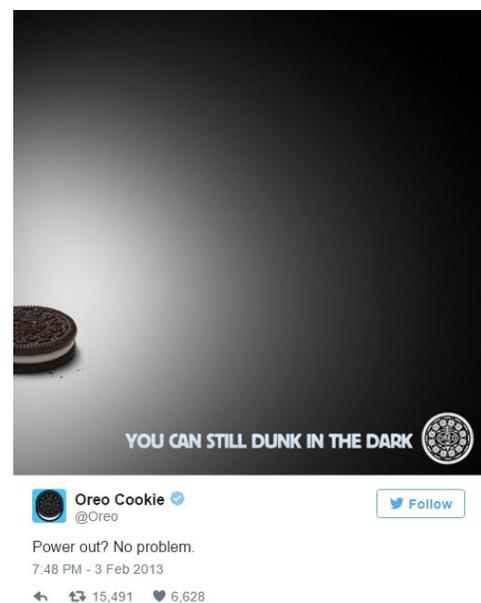
The use of television with the Super Bowl has stayed fairly consistent over the years. The main aspect that has changed is the price to use television. Like mentioned before, ad space has seen a price increase averaging about 11.1% each year for a 30-second spot (*Ad Age*, 2015). This, with the combination that 40% of paid ads in the 2014 Super Bowl were 60 seconds or longer (Kantar Media, 2015), starts to take over a big portion of advertiser's media budgets for the year. As previously stated, in 2014, six Super Bowl advertisers put more than 10% of their full-year media budgets into Super Bowl advertising efforts (Kantar Media, 2015).

The use of social media and the internet with Super Bowl marketing has only started to emerge over the past few years. Much of this comes from the amount of user interaction that happens digitally, especially during a primetime event. Like mentioned before, 57% of people said they will be using Facebook and/or Twitter during the Super Bowl (*When It Comes To The Super Bowl...*, 2014). Facebook, in particular, has become a key location to all things digital, especially when the Super Bowl comes around. In the 2014 Super Bowl, Facebook videos accounted for 25% of all Super Bowl views, marking a dramatic shift in Super Bowl internet viewership that, for the last five years, has been dominated by YouTube. Facebook announced

in January of 2015 that people around the world were posting 75% more videos to Facebook than they were a year ago; and that growth is steeper in the U.S. where people are posting 94% more videos to Facebook. As a result, the number of videos showing up in users' newsfeeds has increased by 360% compared to 2014. In addition, Facebook accounted for 27% of all viewership of the top ten Super Bowl campaigns, where eight of the top ten brands posted content on Facebook. In particular, the top performing campaign of Super Bowl XLVIX, Budweiser's Lost Dog, garnered an impressive 54% of its True Reach of 54.9 million views from the ads placed on Facebook (Russell, 2015). True Reach "combines the views of a brand's original video with related user-uploaded content on hundreds of the web's most visited video sites, including YouTube, Facebook, Vimeo, DailyMotion, and AOL" (Russell, 2015).

Real-Time Marketing

Rather than using pre-approved traditional and social methods of advertising, some brands take a riskier, more impulsive style to marketing in primetime events. This method known as "real-time marketing" is best described as capitalizing on fresh topics with fresh content, instantaneously. This technique became popular when the lights went out in the Superdome in New Orleans, halting Super Bowl XLVII for an agonizing 34 minutes. Oreo and its agency, 360i, were ready to take advantage of this free ad time. "Power out? No problem," their tweet read, accompanied by a heroic image that pointed out, "You can still dunk in the dark" (Rothenberg, 2015).



Oreo's tweet has had a lasting impact. Seizing a topical moment to offer a clever on-message observation has become standard practice for many brands. Oreo's tweet became known for its minimalist charm and the positive press that came with it made other brands desperate for the same sort of attention. Unfortunately, Oreo's success prompted several less-savvy players to jump onto the real-time marketing bandwagon, trying to make the most of trending topics with disastrous results. In fact, in the year following Oreo's Super Bowl tweet, the rush for brands to align themselves with every big-time event got so heated that it inspired *AdAge* to write, "Go Home Real-Time Marketing. You're Drunk," following last year's Super Bowl (Rothenberg, 2015).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: Given the increasing price on Super Bowl ads, is it worth it to brands?

The Super Bowl will continue to be one of the most watched events on television – particularly in the United States. That’s something that the majority of Americans can agree on. And, with that in mind, brands will continue to see the Super Bowl as one of the easiest ways to reach their target audience and more. But, what is the reasoning behind a brand purchasing a meager 30 second advertising slot for \$5 million? Well, it depends. It depends on the strategy that a particular brand is deciding to take when they do any promotional campaign. Are they trying to increase overall brand awareness? Are they releasing a new product/service and want to make sure that it reaches their target audience at one time? Are they simply doing it because of their competitors? These questions, and many more, must be asked for each brand because the answer won’t always be the same which, in turn, leads us back to the original question: is it worth it? The answer: it depends.

RQ2: What factors are important when considering the ROI on Super Bowl ad spending?

At the end of the day, everyone wants to know their return on their investment. With regards to the Super Bowl, this idea becomes a little more complicated because you can’t directly correlate ad spending with sales over the following month, quarter, year, etc. In addition, anything done on social media becomes difficult to measure since there isn’t a correct way to put a dollar value on a Facebook ‘Like’ or a ‘Retweet’ on Twitter. Unfortunately, different factors are going to be important for different companies when considering ROI on

Super Bowl ad spending. Because of this, there is no single right answer although there are some factors that will be important to all.

RQ3: What other strategies could be useful for brands who purchased or did not purchase advertising spots during the Super Bowl?

Every year, some brand decides to be bold and do something that hasn't been done before when it comes to advertising in/around the Super Bowl. In recent years, brands that have purchased advertising spots have gone for the approach of creating a massive cultural moment that will be talked about for days/weeks/months after the Super Bowl. The drawback to this is the fact that practically every brand is taking this approach. Therefore, brands have to find ways to set themselves apart. As for brands who did not purchase advertising spots during the Super Bowl, they heavily load their campaign with social media. Or, they strategically utilize ambush marketing by purchasing spots either directly before or directly after the technical time slot of the Super Bowl for a price cut.

METHODOLOGY & RESULTS

Methodology

In order to find answers to the three research questions above, I utilized primary and secondary resources. These resources ranged from personal interviews with executives at advertising agencies to manually tracking Super Bowl commercials/brands to reading multiple articles about different advertising tactics around the Super Bowl. All of these resources together, through much analysis and synthesis, have allowed me to understand the differing perspectives brands have when approaching the largest advertising stage in the U.S.

Results

RQ1: Given the increasing price in Super Bowl ads, is it worth it to brands?

Looking at the Super Bowl holistically, the answer seems simple. With consistently over 100 million viewers, who wouldn't want their brand to be recognized during the most watched event on television? If you're a smaller brand that decides to spend its advertising budget on one 30-second Super Bowl commercial in order to increase brand awareness, then it is absolutely worth it. On the other hand, if you're a Fortune 500 company, you most likely don't need to increase brand awareness. In that case, what's the angle? At the end of the day, advertising in the Super Bowl is all about perspective. The perspective of a company will then help answer the big question: is it worth it?

Tom Meyer, President of Entertainment at The Marketing Arm, claims that the overall purpose of any company's attempt at the Super Bowl is to create a cultural moment. While this

seems like a fairly easy task in today's social media-driven society, it slowly becomes more and more difficult because every brand is trying to do the same thing – create a cultural moment. In this year's Super Bowl, there were 59 different companies that purchased advertising space. Coming from those 59 different companies, there were 86 advertisements within the Super Bowl's 4-hour period (1 advertisement = 30 seconds of ad space). That ends up being approximately 43 minutes of advertising in one sitting. With that in mind, it's even more important to recognize and assess a brand's perspective of advertising in the Super Bowl before answering whether or not it is worth it.

There's also a simple yet overlooked economic approach to whether or not Super Bowl advertisements are worth the price tag. As the law of supply and demand states, as demand increases, the price increases. With this idea in mind, it's easy to see why the price of Super Bowl ad slots has continually increased. Meyer stated that Super Bowl ad space tends to sell out anywhere between 8-12 months in advance, and it has been that way for the majority of the 21st century. Each time this happens, it tells the television producers one thing – they aren't charging enough. From the perspective of brands, they are getting a bargain on this ad space due to the fact that demand is incredibly high and the television stations should have, and easily could have, charged more. Until television producers price 30-second spots so high that brands aren't willing to spend millions of dollars in advance, then, from a simple economic outlook, the ad space during the Super Bowl is worth it.

One of the relatively smaller companies that decided to purchase ad space during Super Bowl 50 was Marmot. Marmot is an outdoor clothing and sporting goods company that consistently goes up against the likes of The North Face and Patagonia. Being a brand that is

challenging the top dogs in its industry, Marmot viewed the Super Bowl as a platform to simply reach the 100+ million viewers that would be watching the big game. Tom Fritz, VP-marketing at Marmot, stated that Marmot decided to advertise in the Super Bowl in an effort to reach new shoppers and reintroduce the brand to existing customers (Pasquarelli). With this goal in mind, Marmot tried to do exactly what Meyer said – create a cultural moment. In an attempt to do so, Marmot’s commercial showed a man and his companion rodent (Marmot’s mascot) enjoying the outdoors. The commercial ended with a slight plot twist as the man goes in to kiss the rodent along with some other surprising moves that throws the other wildlife off-guard, including the woman and daughter sitting next to them. While the commercial got mixed reviews from critics and fans, Marmot President Mark Martin said, “Whether people will remember our ad in the long run, I think so. I think it will stand out and be distinctive.” With its sophomoric humor, the ad was meant to go along with their new campaign focusing on showcasing the simple joys and benefits of being outside (Casimiro). The question remains: was it worth it? Lucid, a market research firm, found that Marmot went from a pre-game brand awareness of 14% to a high of 27.8%, and held this awareness as well – by the time Peyton Manning was deflecting retirement questions, Marmot’s brand awareness was 23.8% - still a lift of nearly 10% (Lucid). In other words, yes – it was worth it.

On the other hand, Ford is a Fortune 500 company whose brand awareness is already incredibly high. For that reason, their perspective with advertising in the Super Bowl is significantly different. As a matter of fact, Ford opted out of advertising in the Super Bowl this year because, in the words of Stephen Odell, Ford’s executive VP-global marketing, sales and service, “our awareness numbers on all of our products and our brands are actually ratcheting

up pretty quickly. It's not something we need at this point." Instead, Ford is putting more emphasis on digital advertising and word-of-mouth marketing for their new FordPass mobility app (Schultz). So, from Ford's perspective, advertising in the Super Bowl isn't worth it.

What about PepsiCo? PepsiCo is another Fortune 500 company that already has incredibly high brand awareness, yet this is the fourth year in a row that they have sponsored the halftime show. What makes them different from a brand like Ford? Again, it's all about perspective. PepsiCo snacks division Frito-Lay's chief marketing officer, Ram Krishnan, sees the big game as a culmination of months and months of marketing activity, rather than a single interaction on a single day. "The game is an exclamation mark, it's not the be all and end all, at the end of the journey of a conversation we've had with consumers for six months. Gone are the days when it's just Super Bowl Sunday." PepsiCo is also changing who their core consumer is and how people consume media differently in an increasingly multi-screen age. "The generation Z consumers are now our core target – most consumers already are digitally native and they're content creators. They have their own social networks," Krishnan said. With regards to the halftime show, PepsiCo sees it as the biggest concert of the year, with higher ratings than the rest of the game since 120 million people will specifically go out of their way to watch a 15-minute show (Heilpern). At the end of the day, PepsiCo's focus is on creating a cultural moment that starts months in advance and builds up anticipation to the halftime show – the biggest concert of the year. With that mindset, their focus on a new consumer and reaching them through a multi-channel campaign spanning over multiple months makes it absolutely worth it to spend big money in the Super Bowl.

In reality, there isn't a single answer as to whether or not advertising in the Super Bowl is worth it to brands. Although the Super Bowl does reach a massive audience, brands are still going head-to-head during the Super Bowl in order to stand out and create a cultural moment that will help them reach their goal. Once that goal is recognized by a brand, they can then ask themselves whether or not spending \$5 million for 30 seconds during the Super Bowl is feasible and worth it.

RQ2: What factors are important when considering the ROI on Super Bowl ad spending?

Much like RQ1, the specific factors that are important when considering ROI on Super Bowl ad spending is going to change from brand to brand. The key differences come from the mediums and channels brands are utilizing to advertise around the Super Bowl.

With regards to TV advertising and purchasing ad space in the Super Bowl, the general assumption is that companies will immediately use their quarterly sales following the Super Bowl to measure ROI. That's not the case, not to mention the difficulty behind directly correlating a TV advertisement to sales. With TV, the key factors in measuring ROI are reach and awareness, about the brand as a whole and specific attributes about the brand. Awareness can be stretched even further to focus on brand favorability, association, perceptual change, etc. Thankfully, reach and awareness can easily be tailored back to a brand's perspective of using Super Bowl advertisements. If a smaller brand, like Marmot, is solely looking to increase overall brand awareness, then they're going to measure reach – how many people had their televisions on when their commercial aired. For a larger brand like PepsiCo, they'll measure

reach in the same way but they'll specify certain attributes in their commercials in order to increase brand awareness for those attributes.

With regards to advertising on social media, the focus will be primarily on overall impressions (views, likes, retweets, comments, etc.) and online conversation around a brand. Because brands are all trying to create a cultural moment, an ad can be measured through how many people engage with the advertisement on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other channels to determine if it has gone viral. While an advertisement can go viral solely based on the number of impressions, it's important to measure social conversation to see if it has gone viral for a positive or negative reason. While some brands believe that any PR is good PR, an advertisement that goes viral due to negative conversation could completely deter consumers from ever considering that particular brand in a buying situation. Although it may be hard to think that something could ever happen to this extent simply from an advertisement, Nationwide managed to accomplish this feat in Super Bowl 49 when airing a commercial on childhood death.

RQ3: What other strategies could be useful for brands who purchased or did not purchase advertising spots during the Super Bowl?

When it comes to using the Super Bowl as a base for an advertising campaign, it doesn't necessarily mean that a brand must purchase advertising space during the Super Bowl's 4-hour time slot. If a brand buys ad space, they are sure to have an entire campaign running a few days before the big game, during the game, and a few days after as well. If a brand decides not to buy ad space, there are some alternative strategies that have both been applauded and

questioned. Some strategies have been so successful that they have become regular tactics used during the Super Bowl. Others have failed miserably causing brands to drop out of the Super Bowl space the next year. But, every year, brands try to think of something new and different in order to stand out from the crowd, whether having purchased advertising space or not.

In today's social media-driven society, one would think that utilizing social media platforms throughout the Super Bowl would be a given strategy. Until Oreo took advantage of the infamous blackout in Super Bowl XLVII with some witty real-time marketing, brands hadn't thought of creating content on the fly. But, because Oreo's tweet went viral, brands jumped on the bandwagon. Brands soon realized how the younger generations watching the Super Bowl were doing so with phones in hand and posting on social media constantly. While brands who have bought ad space during the Super Bowl now regularly utilize social media as a part of their ad campaign, the brands that decided not to purchase ad space can really benefit from this tactic. With social media being a free way to distribute content and create press, brands can be active and reach the large audience that is on social media during the Super Bowl without spending the big money to do so.

Nationwide, after a traumatic experience in Super Bowl XLIX, decided to take a step back with Super Bowl 50 and not purchase any advertising space. Instead, they focused on their sponsorship of the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year award. But, rather than opting out of any Super Bowl activity, Nationwide leveraged their partnership with Peyton Manning by blatantly rooting for the Denver Broncos and Peyton Manning through social media posts on both Facebook and Twitter. Leading up to the game, Nationwide delivered several content

pieces with “Good Luck, Peyton!” as the headline. Right before the game began, Nationwide posted a 10-second clip revolving around fan superstition when watching a sporting event saying, “Don’t move from your lucky spot” to the Nationwide jingle used in their slogan, “Nationwide is on your side.” Once the game was over and the Denver Broncos had won, Nationwide didn’t hesitate to congratulate Peyton Manning and the rest of the Broncos. Nationwide posted a clip of the two fans from the superstition clip celebrating in addition to reposting a clip from an old Nationwide commercial where Peyton Manning says in the tune of Nationwide’s jingle, “Chicken parm you taste so good” with the hashtag “tastes like victory.” When it comes to Nationwide’s approach to Super Bowl 50, the use of real-time marketing through social media and leveraging America’s favorite quarterback was the safe and secure route. Through this, Nationwide regained lost ground from their reputational blunder during Super Bowl XLIX and saved a lot of money in the process.

Real-time marketing is a simple strategy that brands hadn’t been utilizing for years. Once Oreo did it successfully on the big stage, marketers had this ‘ah ha’ moment and real-time marketing became a normal strategy. Another one of these ‘ah ha’ moments came from the simple idea that you don’t have to buy ad space during the televised Super Bowl. The game has become such an event that people post up and begin watching several minutes before the game even starts because they don’t want to miss anything. The same goes for after the game is over. Consumers don’t just turn off their TV once the final whistle is blown. People keep the game on to watch the trophy presentation while their entertaining all of their house guests at their annual Super Bowl party. The ad spaces before and after the Super Bowl have become prime real estate for a much cheaper price.

For the past few years, Esurance has taken advantage of this cheaper ad space. They have been so proud of the \$1 million - \$1.5 million that they save by not purchasing ad space during the Super Bowl that they boast about it on a public stage in a way that you would not expect. Simply put, Esurance runs a sweepstakes on Twitter. In more detail, they run a 30-second pregame advertisement promoting this contest in which people can win up to \$1 million (and \$1.5 million in previous years) in exchange for tweeting #Esurancesweepstakes. In this year's promotion, the brand's Twitter mentions spiked when the commercial aired, generating 9,000 tweets per minute. The hashtag also trended nationally on Twitter for roughly 15 minutes. And, Esurance ranked No. 1 on first-quarter Super Bowl data for Twitter with 375,000 tweets, with Doritos' 172,000 coming in behind. This idea of building social media buzz around the Super Bowl without buying an in-game spot has become the go-to move for Esurance and has proven successful (Johnson). And, who wouldn't want to win money by sending a seemingly meaningless tweet?

While it's clear that throwing \$5 million on in-game advertising at the Super Bowl is an option, what else could \$5 million get a brand if they want to go with a strategy that is separate from the Super Bowl altogether? If a brand wants to reach Millennials, social media promotions are the route. Through Snapchat, a brand could purchase Snapchat lenses for a week at \$700,000 a day. The photo-sharing platform charges a minimum of 2 cents-per-view on video ads on Discover, so at a \$20 CPM, that's approximately 250 million impressions. With Facebook, a brand could garner over a billion impressions. At the lowest possible cost-per-view (1 cent), and a \$3 per thousand impressions, brands could buy 500 million Facebook video views and 1.6 billion impressions. Mobile app install ads cost an average of 32-cents cost-per-

click on Facebook and, at those rates, a brand could buy 15 million clicks. Through Twitter, brands could buy 10 promoted moments, meaning that you could potentially reach every Twitter user 10 times with 3 billion impressions. And, through Pinterest, a brand could get 166 million impressions at about \$30 per thousand impressions (Pathak).

There are other ways that brands could spend \$5 million on digital media. A brand could take over NYTIMES.com for more than two weeks since it costs approximately \$300,000 to take over their homepage for a day and, for 16 days, reach roughly half of its 70.3 million monthly unique viewers. A brand could also go all in on display ads and buy their way to 2.63 billion display ad impressions at a cost of \$1.90 per thousand impressions (CPM). For brands that want endorsements and influencers, a brand could buy a sponsored tweet from a high-profile celebrity or athlete every week for an entire year. Or, brands could buy five custom emoji's on Twitter at \$1 million per emoji. With all of these possibilities and alternatives, brands that don't want to spend \$5 million for a 30-second commercial shouldn't feel the pressure to do so.

DISCUSSION + IMPLICATIONS

Through my research, my goal was to figure out whether or not the hefty price tag that TV stations place on Super Bowl ad slots was worth it. Originally, I believed that my research was going to end with a simple yes or no answer. Instead, it became very situational – not only in whether buying in-game advertising during the Super Bowl was worth it but what did brands use to evaluate and measure their success regarding the Super Bowl. Much of the answer comes down to the brand's perspective in what they want to achieve through their advertising efforts. The size of the brand and the activity of their competitors are also key factors in determining whether or not it's worth it to spend \$5 million for 30 seconds. At the end of the day, it's also important to recognize alternative strategies that could be cheaper or potentially more effective than spending \$5 million (in addition to production costs, activation, etc.) on 30 seconds in an already saturated event.

The importance behind this research lies in the fact that society places the Super Bowl on a pedestal because it is the most watched event on television in the United States. Alongside that, the Super Bowl has been historically famous for cutting-edge commercials that people hushed the room to hear. That tradition has set a grand stage for ad agencies to put forth commercials and content that will captivate audiences in thought, laughter, and awe. From a brand standpoint, the Super Bowl is an opportunity to open up the curtains and show the world what a brand is capable of. Look at Coke and Pepsi. They have been going back and forth in an attempt to one-up the other for years. As for television, the Super Bowl is all about money. When the sponsorships, promotions, and in-game ad slots sell out months in advance, the

television stations can continually increase the price for everything because, as basic economics states, the demand is far greater than the supply.

With the digital world and social media constantly changing, future research is needed in these areas with regards to measuring ROI on digital content and the monetary value for online interactions and impressions. In addition, to fully understand the world of advertising around the Super Bowl, further research is needed on the ability to correlate sales revenue to advertising efforts.

It's important to note that the Super Bowl, while filled with data points, hasn't been fully researched in regards to utilizing its space for advertising. For this reason, my research was limited due to the lack of prior research studies on the topic. Because of the lack of prior research, much of my data and research was self-reported, limiting its ability to be independently verified, and potentially having bias.

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