

Super Bowl Commercials

Why companies pay millions of dollars for seconds of airtime to advertise during football's biggest game

FEBRUARY 2020 | By Jeanette Ferrara

Helen Sessions/Alamy Stock Photo (doritos); iStockPhoto/Getty Images (pepsi); PackStock/Alamy Stock Photo (m&m's pack); Carolyn Jenkins/Alamy Stock Photo (loose M&M's); Shutterstock.com (phone); Dmytro Aksonov/Getty Images (guys watching football); Illustration by Jeff Mangiat

On February 2, 2020, about 100 million people are expected to turn on their televisions to watch Super Bowl LIV. It's the National Football League's championship game. Many viewers are football fans. But others tune in for a different reason—to watch the entertaining commercials.

With so many people watching, companies pay top dollar to show witty, funny, or engaging advertisements that promote their business. Some brands spend more than \$5 million for only 30 seconds of screen time during the Super Bowl broadcast.

Dave Sutton works at an advertising firm in Atlanta, Georgia, called TopRight. “We expect to be entertained, amused, and delighted [by Super Bowl commercials],” he says. “Especially by celebrities doing silly or heartfelt things.”

Super Bowl LIV will take place on February 2, 2020. About 100 million people are expected to watch. It's the National Football League's championship game. Many viewers are football fans. But others watch for a different reason. They want to see the commercials.

Lots of people watch the Super Bowl. That's why companies pay top dollar to advertise during the game. The advertisements are funny and engaging. They also promote the companies' business. Some brands spend over \$5 million for 30 seconds of Super Bowl screen time.

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Ready, Action!

Producing a Super Bowl ad, even one as short as 30 seconds, takes months of hard work, Sutton explains. Advertisers put together a team to create a memorable commercial.

The team sets a budget. This includes the cost of developing a story, filming the commercial, and buying the airtime. Then they film the ad.

So what makes a good Super Bowl commercial? According to Sutton, it delivers a simple, clear, and memorable story.

“A Super Bowl commercial should do more than entertain,” Sutton explains. “It must sell the brand's goods and services.” An effective Super Bowl ad gives the audience a reason to care and—ultimately—a reason to buy.

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MATH TALK

What numbers might be used to determine whether a Super Bowl ad is considered successful or not?

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Pictographs

What to Do

A graph is a display that shows information, or data, in an organized way. Pictographs use symbols known as pictos to display and compare data between different groups. Each picto has a set value that is stated in the graph’s key.

Example

According to the pictograph, how many dogs did a person see at the park in total?

Each picto represents 4 dogs. That means that one $\frac{1}{2}$ picto represents 2 dogs.

12 Labradors + 16 terriers + 22 bulldogs = 50 dogs in total

So the person saw 50 total dogs at the park.

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Now You Try It

Use the data in the pictograph to answer the following questions.

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Which subject was more often advertised in a commercial—food or cars?

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Which subjects had the same number of ads?

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Which subject was advertised the fewest number of times during the 2019 Super Bowl? How many times was that?

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How many of the ads shown during the 2019 Super Bowl were about cars?

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A total of 54 ads were aired during the 2019 Super Bowl. How many ads are not represented in this chart?

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VIDEOS (1)

SKILLS SHEETS (4)

SKILLS SHEETS (4)

SKILLS SHEETS (4)

SKILLS SHEETS (4)

LESSON PLAN (2)

LESSON PLAN (2)

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