



Kellogg Superbowl Advertising Review

2007 Results

By Tim Calkins

The 2007 Superbowl featured more than three dozen advertisers, all battling it out for supremacy in the biggest advertising event in the world.

The results this year were all over the board; a few advertisers ran very strong spots while others fell flat. There were three notable themes:

1. **Safety:** This was a year of safe Superbowl advertising. Marketers were careful not to offend anyone, and careful not to take too many creative risks. Even then edgiest of advertisers, GoDaddy, was relatively restrained.
2. **Humor:** All of the top rated advertisers were funny. All of the low rated advertisers were not. Even funny spots that were not particularly funny did ok; they were trying and that was apparently enough. Completely missing were spots that touched the heart.
3. **User Generated Ads:** The big story this year was user generated content. Three advertisers asked ordinary people to help create their ads: NFL, Chevrolet and Doritos. Each organization did it slightly differently, but the core idea was the same. The result? Advertising executives should rest easy; the winning spots were mediocre. And many of the winning spots were actually created by aspiring advertising executives, not ordinary people with just a video camera and an idea.

For the third year, I watched the event with a panel of Kellogg MBA students. Our focus was simple: which advertisers were most successful? Would the spots build the business and build the brand? This is a unique approach; while many organizations evaluate Superbowl ads based on creativity, only Kellogg evaluates the advertisements as business and brand building initiatives.

What follows below are the best, the very good and the worst spots of the 2007 Superbowl, as ranked by the Kellogg panel.

The Best

Sprint

Sprint ran just one spot on the Superbowl but it was a very effective piece of advertising. Sprint was the Kellogg panel's highest rated advertiser.

The Sprint spot was a parody of a pharmaceutical ad. The spot focused on “connectile dysfunction”, a not so subtle play on some other more delicate conditions. The core message was that Sprint provided better connectivity than Verizon.

The benefit was clear, the branding was good and the spot was likeable; it simply worked.

Bud/Bud Light

Once again, Budweiser proved that it knows Superbowl advertising better than anyone. The company ran a series of very strong spots, each of which worked relatively well.

The two best spots were for Bud Light: Wedding and Language Class. These two spots were funny and engaging, and directly hit the message that people will go to extremes for a Bud Light.

The core Budweiser ads were not as strong; the Crabs spot was entertaining and the Dalmation spot was cute, but the work didn't have enormous emotional appeal.

The worst Budweiser spot was for Bud Select. This ad made little sense, reflecting the fact that the product itself makes little sense. What is Bud Select, anyway? Anyone?

Blockbuster

The third spot to run on the Superbowl was one of the best, a very cute commercial for Blockbuster. A rabbit and guinea pig were tapping a small mouse, in a bid to get on-line and order movies from Blockbuster. The message: you can now access Blockbuster on the internet, so you can get movies through the mail and moves through the store.

The message was clear, the branding was strong and the spot was very engaging.

Snickers

Snickers ran a clever spot about two men eating a Snickers bar at the same time; at the end they inadvertently kiss, which causes them much concern.

The spot was unexpected and surprising and clearly communicated a benefit about Snickers.

FedEx

FedEx is one of the long time Superbowl advertisers, and the company was back again this year to continue the streak.

FedEx ran two spots. The first spot featured package delivery on the moon, a somewhat improbable concept. The second spot was much better; it was entertaining and clearly made the point that FedEx Ground is fast, despite the name.

The Very Good

Emerald Nuts

Emerald Nuts was back again this year with another quirky spot. This year's execution featured Robert Goulet. The commercial put forth the theory that every afternoon when you get tired and

doze off Robert Goulet shows up and messes with your stuff. Emerald Nuts, however, give you energy so you can keep Goulet at bay.

The spot was charming and funny and communicated a benefit.

Career Builder

Career Builder ran three strong spots, all highlighting different parts of the working life. Career Builder is fast becoming the Dilbert of the advertising world, with a keen eye for the peculiarities of the working life.

Last year Career Builder's ads featured chimps. This year's spots featured people. Last year's ads were funnier, proving once and for all that chimps are funnier than people.

Career Builder's differentiating message was a bit lost this year; you had to listen very closely to hear that Career Builder has the most jobs.

Coke

After a decade long hiatus, Coke was back advertising on the Superbowl this year. The brand ran four different spots, all of which were effective and well branded.

The best spot was an upbeat, positive commercial, Happiness Factory.

The only real problem for Coke was the lack of a consistent message. The four different spots felt like, well, four different spots. There wasn't anything connecting them together.

Toyota

Toyota focused on one thing: the product. Toyota showed product demonstrations highlighting the power and breaking of its new Tundra truck.

The spots were effective because the benefits were clear and the settings were spectacular. The message was delivered cleanly: this is a serious truck.

Taco Bell

What do you call two lions talking about Taco Bell's new product? Charming. This was a simple, clear, well branded spot.

The Worst

Garmin

Garmin ran the worst spot on the Superbowl. The spot featured a map monster fighting the Garmin man. This was in theory a take-off on Japanese monster films, but the connection was lost on me and lost on the Kellogg panel. I suppose the message here was that the Garmin is easier to use than a map. But the entire spot was such a complicated and cluttered mess that it wasn't clear precisely what was happening. As one of the panelists on the Kellogg panel observed, "I had no idea what was going on in that spot."

King Pharmaceuticals

The message in the King Pharmaceuticals ad was simple: take care of your heart. The company knows that if people worry about their heart, they will end up needing high blood pressure medication, and King is the leader in that segment.

The ad, however, was a disaster; a man wearing a heart costume was chased through the streets of a city and roughed up by characters dressed in black wearing signs such as “high blood pressure” and “obesity.” It felt a lot like a first grade health class video.

HP

This spot, featuring the Choppers, was simply terrible; it was poorly branded and didn't communicate any benefit at all. It ended with the rather profound line, “The personal computer is now personal again.” What, precisely, does this mean? I have no idea.

Izod

The Izod spot featured beautiful people living a beautiful life. It lacked any connection to the audience. Branding was weak and the benefit was absent.

Salesgenie.com

This ad was almost too painful to watch. The slick successful sales executive lives the perfect life, complete with fawning boss and beautiful girl friend. All this is due, of course, to Salesgenie.com.

Ouch.

Other Notable Spots

Nationwide

The good news is Nationwide ran a much better spot this year than last year. The bad news is the advertisement still made little sense.

This year Nationwide enlisted Kevin Federline to highlight the fact that things change quickly in life, so you need to be ready and purchase annuities.

There are two big problems. First, I suspect most of the people in this world who are thinking of buying annuities have no idea who K-Fed is. Second, communicating that people need annuities doesn't make any sense when you are a small share player in the crowded world of annuity providers. The real question is why anyone should call Nationwide for annuities. This ad fails completely to provide an answer.

Doritos

Doritos deserves a prize for getting enormous press attention this year. By asking consumers to create the Doritos Superbowl spot, Doritos received incredible coverage, starting late last year and running right up to the game.

The end result was a pair of mediocre ads. But this was a secondary consideration, because Doritos had won before the game started.

Pepsi

Pepsi didn't run a notable spot. Pepsi didn't actually run any spots. In a year when Coke returned to the Superbowl, Pepsi exited. This is very strange indeed.

PepsiCo did run spots for Sierra Mist, but these were weak.

My advice: sell Pepsi stock and buy Coke stock...the momentum in the great beverage battle has clearly shifted.

Schick

If you are going to purchase a spot on the Superbowl, you should create a new piece of creative. Schick aired an old ad and the result was predictably snoozy. To break through, you need something new. My advice for Schick: next year, save the money unless you have something new to say.