

Super Bowl 43: Advertisers Won, Too

by Eric Franchi, Monday, February 9, 2009



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SUPER BOWL 43 WAS MEMORABLE for several reasons, so much so that the media world is still buzzing about it a week later. It was arguably one of the best games ever, and certainly one of the most exciting fourth quarters in recent history. A record number of viewers tuned in as well -- Nielsen's final report put it at 98.7 million, up a full million over last year.

Unprecedented economic times meant no ads from perennial sponsors General Motors and FedEx. But despite the loss of these brands, NBC successfully sold all 65 spots for a record \$206 million, with in-game ads running at \$3 million apiece. That is up 11% from last year's Fox rate for the game. The advertisements themselves were well-done, as usual, and a review is beyond the scope of this post. But I'm sure I wasn't the only online video fan that smiled when Alec Baldwin's comical, but important, Hulu spot aired!

As everyone seems to become a bit of an ad enthusiast at Super Bowl time, this year was the first time many advertisers took full advantage by unveiling their spots early. Every major news outlet and video site had a section that featured Super Bowl ads, allowing for quick viral distribution. Additionally, social tools such as Twitter and online polls allowed the ads to be discussed and voted on in real time. The total effect on this was unprecedented online user engagement with these ads both before and after the game. According to copyright monitoring organization BayTSP, Super Bowl ads have been viewed 28 million times since Sunday alone, with the top four ads seeing over one million unique online views each.

Let's think about this from an economic perspective for a moment. The incredibly well-done "Transformers 2" movie ad (which was not released online prior to the game) received 3.7 million unique views online after the game, according to BayTSP. That means the movie studio enjoyed an incremental 4% of additional views, at no cost. Taken a step further, one could argue that the online views could hold even more value since it is a user-driven (rather than media-controlled) play of the ad in a lean-forward environment.

For an advertiser, this is fantastic news. Super Bowl ads take time, strategy, hard work and a great deal of money to produce. The Web offers marketers not only the ideal vehicle to continue user engagement after a TV ad (see the Hyundai Genesis microsite www.edityourown.com for a great example), but a way to drive more value for the spots as well. Advertisers who leverage the medium fully via online video are the real winners.