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February 9, 2010

ADVERTISING

Do-It-Yourself Super Ads

By **STUART ELLIOTT**

BE afraid, Madison Avenue. Be very afraid.

That seems to be the message in the aftermath of the crowded, frenetic advertising bowl that took place inside Super Bowl XLIV on Sunday. Among those commercials consistently deemed most effective, memorable and talked-about, many were created or suggested by consumers — or produced internally by the sponsors — rather than the work of agency professionals.

That should give the modern-day “Mad Men” pause, particularly since so many people watched the game — an average of 106.5 million, the Nielsen Company reported, the largest audience ever for a television show.

Most notable, according to a cascade of surveys, polls and analyses released on Monday, were a couple of commercials for Doritos snack chips sold by the Frito-Lay division of PepsiCo, along with a spot for the search-engine services provided by Google. The Doritos commercials were created by consumers and the Google spot was created internally.

For instance, the two Doritos commercials were among the most-watched among all the spots in households with TiVo digital video recorders. The commercial called “House Rules” finished first and the commercial called “Underdog” came in fourth.

“The answer is not that everyone should fire their agencies and have users create campaigns,” said Todd Juenger, vice president and general manager for TiVo audience research and measurement. Rather, he added, consumers seem to know best what other consumers will like to watch in the “unique” ad environment of the Super Bowl.

“House Rules” was in fifth place, as of Monday afternoon, among all commercials from the game played by visitors to the FanHouse section of AOL. Both “House Rules” and “Underdog” received high ratings from those visitors, averaging four out of five stars.

In two separate surveys among users of Twitter, Doritos finished first. In the BrandBowl — conducted by Mullen, an agency owned by the Interpublic Group of Companies, and Radian6 — the Doritos brand generated the most Tweets. In a monitoring of Twitter by Colle & McVoy, part of MDC Partners, using a tool called Squawq, the “House Rules” commercial emerged as the leader.

“House Rules” was also the most-liked Super Bowl spot as of Monday afternoon in an online vote at Hulu.com, which will continue through Tuesday night, and “Underdog” was ranked fourth. In a poll on ChaCha, a free answers service, users — primarily teenagers and young adults — said their favorite commercials were for Doritos.

The Nielsen BuzzMetrics service of Nielsen found that Doritos was the “most buzzed-about” advertiser during and after the game, followed by Google.

“Underdog” came in second in the annual USA Today Ad Meter survey, behind only a commercial for Snickers featuring Betty White and Abe Vigoda that was created by a real agency, BBDO New York, part of the BBDO Worldwide unit of the Omnicom Group.

Under the rules of the Crash the Super Bowl contest sponsored by Frito-Lay, which drew 4,000 entries from would-be Don Drapers, the creator of “Underdog,” a 24-year-old from Raleigh, N.C., named Joshua Svoboda, won \$600,000 for the second-place finish — not a bad return for an outlay he estimated at \$200.

(The creator of “House Rules,” Joelle De Jesus of Hollywood, won \$25,000 in the contest; that spot came in 11th in the Ad Meter.)

“The Super Bowl this year says consumer-generated content really can work,” said Tim Calkins, a marketing professor at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

Despite “a lot of advertising people” playing down the trend as “a seventh-grader in his backyard with a video camera,” Mr. Calkins said, it complements efforts by marketers to engage and involve consumers.

The Google commercial, which demonstrated how a search for “study abroad Paris” proceeds to “jobs in Paris,” “churches in Paris” and “how to assemble a crib,” won the top plaudits from the Kellogg School’s sixth annual Super Bowl ad review panel as well as from the female respondents to a survey by the Kaleidoscope Group, a division of the Hoffman York agency that specializes in advertising to women.

The Google commercial also drew the most positive rating, at 98 percent, in research by Zeta Interactive using its Zeta Buzz online media mining technology, followed by the “House Rules” Doritos spot, at 95 percent.

“Google pulled off something that in its simplicity defined what Google is all about,” said Al DiGuido, chief executive at Zeta Interactive.

The praise for the Google spot, part of a campaign carrying the theme “Search on,” were not unanimous.

“Why was Google in the forefront of the movement from old advertising to new, legitimizing TV by buying a spot in the Super Bowl?” asked Gary M. Stibel, chief executive at the New England Consulting Group.

Sandra Heikkinen, a spokeswoman for Google, said the commercial was among a series of videos produced by “some of our creative people” demonstrating how Google search tries “to remove everything but the product and the user.”

“The response to these videos was tremendous, both within and outside the company,” she wrote in an e-mail

message, “so we decided to share our favorite one with as many people as possible.”

For all the attention paid to the commercials that performed well, there were also research into the spots that flopped or failed.

A commercial for Skechers Shape-up sneakers drew the most negative chatter on Facebook and Twitter, according to Fizziolo.gy, a social media analyst, followed by a spot for Taco Bell featuring Charles Barkley.

“The degree of negativity was frightening” for Skechers, said Ben Carlson, president at Fizziolo.gy, perhaps because it was a prosaic product ad that was shown twice.

The Taco Bell spot drew criticism of Mr. Barkley’s portly appearance. “He’s not a good spokesman,” Mr. Stibel said. “He looked like he’s had a few too many.”

There was also bad buzz about spots that some viewers complained had demeaned women, among them commercials for Bridgestone tires, Dodge Charger, Flo TV and GoDaddy.com.

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