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Watch out for the Super Bowl tease

By JENNIFER MANN



The smart money in Super Bowl XLII isn't only on the Pats or the Giants.

It's also on advertisers who can cleverly leverage \$2.7-million-per-30-second TV spots by drawing millions of viewers online in the hours, days or even weeks after the game.

At a cost of \$90,000 per second, advertisers want to get as much punch as possible from the game, which last year drew an audience of 93.2 million, but also by drawing attention to their spots before and after.

Indeed, stretching Super Bowl ad dollars may be even more important than usual given that the writers strike has made much of network television little more than a parade of reruns.

"I think where the Internet is playing its place is by teasing people before the game, and then giving them a place to talk about it afterward," said David Baldwin, chairman of the **One Club**, which presides over one of the most prestigious awards in advertising.

"I think one of the most interesting things is that the consumer isn't really making the distinction anymore between TV and viral," he said. "They have a host of choices as to where they can go view content and don't really think about it."

As for which ads will be memorable, there are two ways to go, "and smart players know both," Baldwin said. "You can create ads that are relevant and engaging and simple, or you can pull your pants down. The difference is one is much more long-lasting and the other a flash in the pan."

Not surprisingly, one of the most adept at getting Internet buzz is the company whose name often comes to mind first when talking about Super Bowl ads, St. Louis-based **Anheuser-Busch**.

Last year, Anheuser — the longest-running advertiser in the big game — reported that its Super Bowl spots were viewed 30 million times online in the days after the game.

The brewing behemoth is working to pump up the pre-game and post-game online glow even further this year.

Anheuser has devised a scheme in which consumers who have signed up on its Web site receive text messages after each of its commercials have aired to vote on the spot.

After the game, they are e-mailed an access code to a “secret” spot, available only to those who have signed up and visited their Web site to view ads that did not appear on television.

Garmin International returns to the Super Bowl for the second time in two years with a commercial shot in France promoting its Nuvi line of portable navigation devices and the company’s new slogan — “Follow the leader.”

The Olathe navigation company is promoting the commercial on its Web site and its blog and has set up a special Web site just for the 30-second spot. At garmin.com/gameday, viewers can see the commercial, an extended version of the spot and a “making of” video and download the soundtrack.

“The Super Bowl tends to be a place where big brands advertise or advertisers become big brands,” said Jon Cassat, vice president of communications for Garmin.

Garmin also is designing a graphic icon of the car used in the commercial, a vintage French Panhard, which can be downloaded to show up on a Nuvi’s navigation screen.

“We’re using our Web site and our blog to promote more hits and more awareness,” said Garmin spokeswoman Jessica Myers. “We want people to feel more a part of the commercial.”

Pepsi’s Doritos brand is having consumers vote online on music videos for new acts and then will run a 60-second video as its Super Bowl commercial.

There are others that don’t believe in posting their ads online before the game, including **Hershey**, which is running an ad for its Ice Breakers Ice Cubes featuring former “Baywatch” babe Carmen Electra.

“We don’t want anybody to see the commercial before it airs on Sunday,” said company spokesman Chris Goodrich. “The company prefers that because that anticipation of ads has become such a big part of the Super Bowl they want to keep that intact.”

Then there are those like **KFC**, which isn’t splurging for a Super Bowl spot but is working the Internet to create a buzz through www.showusyourhotwings.com. At that site, people submitted videos of themselves doing the chicken dance to help KFC spread word it will donate \$260,000 to charity for any Super Bowl player who does a 3-second chicken dance.

The NFL, which doesn’t get to tap into the revenue stream of KFC’s strategy, is not amused.

News Corp.’s Fox, which is broadcasting the Super Bowl, is doing its part to give added value to the 34 different marketers collectively shelling out about \$170 million, and cashing in itself on the Internet interest. All of the ads will be posted after the game on the social networking site **MySpace.com**, which News Corp. also owns. Advertisers can also post additional content to run along with their ads.

Fran Kelly, president of Boston-based ad agency **Arnold Worldwide** and co-author of *The Breakaway Brand: How Great Brands Stand Out*, said the move by Fox and MySpace is a smart viral strategy.

While using the Internet as part of their strategy is still pretty new, it already has proved its worth to marketers.

Last year, companies that ran ads during the Super Bowl collectively saw Web traffic increase to their sites by 50 percent the day after.

Job searching Web site CareerBuilder.com saw post-game traffic increase by 150 percent.

Cymfony, a division of **TNS Media Intelligence**, came up with a volume index score that compares the total volume of coverage and discussion of Super Bowl advertisers to those in general. Marketers that announced two weeks before the game that they were running a spot scored a volume index of 203, twice that of a typical advertiser.

The firm also found that advertisers that made their ads available online well before the game generated 4.3 times greater post-game coverage than the average of companies that merely announced they'd bought a Super Bowl spot.

Based on the pre-game buzz created by the Internet in the past few years, Baldwin of One Club questions the wisdom of companies holding back.

"I think that those that are holding their cards close to their vest are missing an opportunity," said Baldwin, "an opportunity to turn a 30-second spot literally into a week-and-a-half experience."

Ad trends

Here are a few things to look for in Super Bowl ads this year:

- SalesGenie.com is aiming for the second year in a row to have the worst-rated ad in the lineup, reasoning it can throw together a crummy ad without spending a lot of money, and if they play it just right, can generate PR.
- Expect this year to see many ads aimed at women, including Sunsilk hair products and Tide to Go.
- Local companies Garmin International and Helzberg Diamonds are running Super Bowl ads. Garmin is promoting its Nuvi line of devices, and Helzberg is reminding guys that Valentine's Day is right around the corner.
- Researchers at the University at Buffalo School of Management and Cornell University found in a study of 529 commercials that aired during Super Bowls from 1989 to 2005 that investors favored stocks of firms that aired likable Super Bowl commercials.
- Audi is back for the first time in years with an ad that's been described as being inspired by "The Godfather." Other auto-related advertisers are Cars.com, General Motors, Hyundai and Toyota.