

Background

Practically an official national holiday in the United States, Super Bowl Sunday is often considered the wedding industry’s vacation weekend, as it is the weekend with the fewest weddings planned across the country. Even people who do not like the sport of Football will tune in to watch the ads and enjoy the spectacle of this mega media event.

“Mega media event” describes it best, with many brands using it as a stage to launch new products, taking full advantage of the mass audience. Super Bowl XLVI was watched by a record 111.3 million viewers, making it the most watched telecast in U.S. history.*

This year’s Super Bowl marks the first time that the game was simultaneously broadcast over the Internet, providing unique features of multiple camera angles and real-time statistics. Several technological bugs existed however, as the broadcast stream and the Internet stream did not sync, making it difficult to utilize a dual screen approach to enjoy the game. For those people who did not have access to a TV however, the online stream provided incremental audience reach. NOTE: NBC has not yet released the online audience figures; additional evaluation needs to be considered.

Although the promised second screen viewing technology may have been a disappointment for football fans seeking a deeper engagement in the game, the 2012 Super Bowl was not without a heavy share of second screen interaction. As predicted, this was the year of the ‘Mobile Bowl,’ with several advertisers taking advantage of tablet and mobile devices to provide further interaction with their online ads.

Earned Media Exposure

Last year, several advertisers chose to pre-launch their ads online. These ads drove a level of buzz marketing and anticipation; audiences were talking about the ads during the build up for the event. A considerable portion of the audience had heard about the ads, but not seen them, creating game-day anxiety for audiences to not miss the ‘already talked about’ ads. These same ads had more social buzz stemming from the longer shelf life and reduced competition for airtime. The trend was embraced by many brands this year, taking advantage of the two-week build-up prior to the game where the ads were a large part of discussion in the media. More than 30million views of pre-released ads were watched in the days leading up to the game.†

% Search Requests Related to Super Bowl Commercials ‡		
	Pre-Game	In-Game
Mobile	25%	41%
PC/Laptop	75%	59%

However, in-game audiences reached for their mobile devices, as Google reports mobile search queries related to the Super Bowl ads shifted heavily toward mobile devices during the game, as people sought to re-watch an ad. Overall search query volume related to TV Ads during the Super Bowl increased on average 1000%.§

Comedian Will Ferrell created another one in his series of Old Milwaukee brand beer ads, which ran during the Super Bowl, but only in North Platte, Nebraska (the countries smallest TV market), where Nielsen estimates that only 15,180 homes saw the ad. However, the ad has seen tremendous level of mentions on Twitter (nearly 2000 mentions), compared to an average of 1000 mentions for national TV advertisers. The ad has another 155,000 views on YouTube, compared to Budweiser’s

* Based on total viewers P2+ as reported in the media

† Google 2012

‡ Ibid

§ Yahoo! 2012

high-production value ads at only 99,000 views. And at a cost of only \$1500 to place the ad (opposed to the \$3.5MM for a national ad spot), Old Milwaukee is riding high on the crest of earned media.

Mobile & Tablet Innovation

Second Screen apps were the biggest innovation during the Super Bowl. Two prominent apps stood out:

Chevy 'Game Time' App – This app integrated with the heavy frequency of 7 superbowl ads and asked users to find the license plate numbers printed on the cars in the TV ads, and match them to unique license plates included in each download of the app itself for a chance to win one of 20 cars. Trivia and videos added extra features to the app. But the big benefit of the app was the data collected... not only was Foot Ball trivia asked, but auto trivia, Chevy brand trivia, and ad awareness questions such as “How many arms do the aliens have in the Volt ad?” A great way to capture ad exposure and message communication. According to the app itself, over 733,434 minutes of in-app usage were clocked during the Super Bowl, and over 3million trivia questions were answered.



Subway 'PrePlay' App - The Sandwich maker took a slightly different approach in embracing the two-screen trend, not building a unique app experience, but sponsoring an already popular app for the game. The 'PrePlay' app lets users predict the next play of the game, and then brag (via twitter) when they guess correctly. Correctly predicting plays gained points redeemable at Subway sandwich shops.



Verizon Wireless streamed the Super Bowl this year onto mobile phones. This was negotiated as part of the NFL sponsorship that brought the NFL exclusively to Verizon subscribers this year.

Shazam-enabled Super Bowl ads – The jury is still out on the use of audio-tagging service Shazam in ads. For the first time, Shazam provided advertisers the opportunity to drive mobile and tablet interaction through their listening application. The company reports that they had over a million ‘engagements’ of people unlocking additional content on their mobile devices or playing along with the Superbowl and Halftime show. About half of the Superbowl ads included the Shazam prompt, but the awareness of Shazam and the significance of the prompt appears to still be in growth stages. Shazam will be providing a similar ‘audio fingerprinting’ service to future media events (Grammy’s, CMA’s), where the association with music may drive higher performance. With listening technologies such as Shazam and Apple’s Siri gaining popularity, we anticipate this space will continue to see innovative ideas generated that utilize these technologies from a marketing perspective.

One spot featured a prominent SMS short-code to download content and participate in a sweepstakes, but many commented that responses from the marketer were slow to arrive, leading to a less than desirable experience.

InMobi conducted a survey of 1,100 people using their mobile devices during the game, and found that more than 40% of them claimed to be using the device to respond or interact with ads.

Social Media Promotion

Similar to last year, there was little overt drive-to-social media. Less than 16% included either Facebook or Twitter mentions. We found this interesting given the record high volume of Twitter traffic and Facebook mentions during this year's game.

- 3.7 million Super Bowl-related tweets between 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. EST.
- The peak was 12,233 tweets per second, up from 4,064 during last year's game and a mere 27 during 2008's Super Bowl. The peak came during the game's thrilling final 3 minutes.
- The top hashtags were all about commercials
- Madonna's halftime show averaged 8,000 tweets per second with a peak of 10,245 tweets.

However, Twitter played an important role in generating content for many of the second screen apps that were developed. Live streams were included in all of the apps, and provided a sense of camaraderie while watching the game; many of the apps had considerable down-time in which the live twitter streams were a welcome diversion.

Summary

We will continue to see savvy marketers utilize live media events to engage audiences with social media and discover new content. However, the big learning from 2012's Super Bowl is the tremendous success of second screen viewing and integration with mobile/tablet apps. This will not only provide more robust viewing experiences as technologies to sync the broadcast feed and the web/mobile feeds improve, but also better brand engagement as integrated/play-along with the content strategies continue to be negotiated with media vendors.

Oh... and for those of you who were wondering... the New York Giants won the game, defeating the New England Patriots 21-17 in nail biting ending.

Additional Reading:

- <http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/2012/02/06/five-trends-how-brands-integrated-social-mobile-and-web-into-2012-super-bowl-advertisements/>
- <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2012/02/super-bowl-xlvi-mobile-manning-and.html>
- <http://gmauthority.com/blog/2012/01/chevrolet-has-purchased-seven-super-bowl-ad-spots/>
- <http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/167247/anticipointment-mobile-execs-weigh-in-on-super.html>
- <http://www.forbes.com/sites/erikkain/2012/02/06/superbowl-online-streaming-was-it-a-success/>