

# Marketing Lessons from the 2017 Super Bowl<sup>1</sup>

## With applications for Direct Food & Ag Marketing Businesses

Super Bowl LI was one for the record books. More interesting for us, though, is the commercials! They were a snapshot of what is happening in marketing and showed us signs of the hot trends in marketing for 2017. Each year, our team watches with a keen eye to see what collective trends develop, how far marketers are willing to think outside of their brand, and how these trends can be used with food and agriculture direct marketing.

As you review our analysis of the trends, consider these questions in regards to your business:

- How does this relate to your business and your brand?
  - How can you use these trends to update your online presence (webpage, social media, etc)?
  - What trends can you take advantage of and how can you make a plan for promotions?
1. **Political Points** – We all know the challenges with entering into political discussions at work and at Thanksgiving. Some are offended, others are proud you are stepping up for what you believe in, and others just want to avoid the topic. Today’s politics make it difficult for marketers to avoid the conversation. This year’s commercials were more political than we’ve seen in years. Some as bold as politics are in today’s world.
    - a. **Budweiser** (Born the Hard Way) – The story about Adolphus Busch immigrating and founding the company. The company says it was not making a political point and it was a continuation of last year’s Brew Hard commercial, though. It was so popular; it was a Top 10 in USA Today’s ad meter.
    - b. **84 Lumber** (The Journey begins) – A “Super Long” 90 second commercial seems to criticize the new administration, but a six minute YouTube video supports legal immigration. The message created a blitz of social media debates and the 84 Lumber website crashed during the game.
    - c. **10 Haircare** (America – We’re in for at least four years of awful hair) – This was our favorite political ad. Made its political point in a fun, creative way without attacking the new administration..
    - d. **Audi** (equal pay for equal work) – The story of racing with father and the hopes for his daughter. This story reached the audience on several emotional levels. Top 10 in USA Today’s ad meter.
    - e. **SoFi** (Social Financing) – Reducing student loans was the topic, even showing a young professional dragging a ball and chain. The message was together we can conquer even more.
    - f. **Farm Ideas** – Getting in the political game used to be a no-no for marketers; even more so on the local level for retailers that rely on the general public to walk in their doors and purchase a pie or buy a hayride ticket. These ads showed it is more acceptable to be political, as long as you are not making a direct attack on a politician. Not all of these ads were touchy subjects. Some simply used creativity to get discussion started. To use this trend, think about cause support in your community. Can you support the building of something new for the community? Can you showcase your female managers as strong and powerful? We have many women farm owners and managers who could be highlighted to show equality in your business and that you stand with them.
  2. **Connecting with all People and Having an Open Mind (Quasi-Political)** – While not directly addressing one of the hot political topics, many advertisers addressed political views with a theme of communicating, understanding and having an open mind to new ideas and adventures.
    - a. **Airbnb** (We all Belong) – It was a celebration of multiculturalism in the Super Bowl ad. The brand was never mentioned and the company only showed their brand logo at the end.
    - b. **NFL** (Inside these Lines) – The commercial focused on football bringing all people together, starting with football, but leading up to the outline of the US stating, “live, unite, inside these lines.”
    - c. **Expedia** (Train) – A young woman travels the world. “You’ll bridge continents,” was the theme.

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- d. **Coca-Cola** (It's Beautiful) – The ad features people singing “America the Beautiful” in several languages.
  - e. **Google** (Google Home) – A diverse group of people using Google who call America home. *Take Me Home, Country Roads* was played in the background to set the mood of home.
  - f. **Farm Ideas** – Is your brand promoting your diversity? Are you willing to listen when customers make a comment you don't agree with? The theme here is embracing diversity inside and outside your business by connecting to all people. Does your marketing connect with all people? What new marketing channels might help you reach new and diverse audiences? Consider partnering with the local tourism bureau or chamber of commerce to create marketing messages to celebrate your region and partners in the industry. Partnering with local farm groups to celebrate local agriculture and the diversity of immigrants coming in to work the land may be a win-win for all.
3. **This is for the Baby Boomers** – Although they are no longer the largest generation, Baby Boomers are just behind Millennials in terms of overall population in the US. Thus, they are an important source of sales. Many brands decided they were watching the game, and sought to target them more than usual.
- a. **Mercedes** (Easy Driver) – The biker boomers listen to Steppenwolf while dealing with Peter Fonda and his Mercedes sports car blocking them their bikes.
  - b. **Bud Light** (The Ghost Spuds) – This was the resurrection of '80s Bud Light mascot, Spuds MacKenzie. In a different type of Christmas Story he came back from the dead to get a lazy guy off the couch and out with his friends.
  - c. **KFC** (Georgia Gold) – The commercial had two colonels spreading the word about Georgia Gold Chicken. The odd humor and golden complexion may be why it was low on USA Today Ad Meter.
  - d. **Alfa Romeo** (Riding Dragons kids feeling, Being Predictable, Set it Free) – They used all three commercials to promote breaking out of the rut, in search of US sales. Although they claim to look for a younger market, the lower price point appeals to boomers who want to be set free. Their attempt to rebrand to a younger audience may work better by advertising during other shows.
  - e. **Farm Ideas** – Who are the boomers buying your products? What messages are you crafting to get them to come in the door? A focus of many farms is grandparents. But, are you really doing anything to get grandparents to bring the grandkids to the farm for activities? What stimulates them to come? If fruits and vegetables are your game, are you reducing quantities to households of two eating meals? How do you encourage frequent shopping trips for boomers? Don't forget – not all of them are retired!
4. **Re-Branding** – Brands get stale. Sales get stale. Some reboots are frequent, others are long overdue.
- a. **Michelob Ultra** (Our Bar) – The beer is a fitness-friendly beverage, designed for a thirsty crowd who cares about calories, and crossfit. The theme song from Cheers playing in the background.
  - b. **Mr Clean** (Cleaner of Your Dreams) – Mr Clean goes sexy. Tag line, “You got to love a guy who cleans up.” Interesting twist for their target market. This ad was a top 10 in USA Today's ad meter.
  - c. **Buick** (That's a Buick?) – Cam Newton and model Miranda Kerr make appearances at a pee wee football game. Buick's work to change the idea about what a Buick looks like and who drives one. The ad hits home younger drivers. This was another top 10 in USA Today's ad meter.
  - d. **NFL** (Superbowl babies) – NFL is family. This is part of a continued marketing strategy to show the NFL cares about family issues and wants you to keep watching as a family. Yet another top 10 in USA Today's ad meter.
  - e. **Bush Beer** (Bushhhh) – Rebranding from a cheap college boy beer to one for nature lovers.
  - f. **Nintendo** (Nintendo Switch) – Repositioning from an individual player experience to one for families or party games. Thus, they're working to expand sales and use to a broader market.
  - g. **McDonald's** – The “I'm lovin' it” jingle was nowhere to be found. Front and center was their famous Big Mac with a very different beat.



- h. **Farm Ideas** – The winter months are an opportunity to review the brand. Does your brand need a reboot? Your logo and color scheme may be fine, but is your website up to date with graphic trends? Are you using infographics and other new ways of communicating to your target market? Is your signage what it should be? Does your chalk need replaced with liquid chalk markers? Take a look at sales trends to see what might need upgraded as far as activities and product offering. Use the winter months to reach out to old and new customers with an update to your brand.
5. **Odd, yet Intriguing** – Although somewhat different from last year’s trend, the general idea is to create curiosity or create interest in something that’s outlandish. Similar to rubber necking at car accidents along the road, marketers try to create something that you just can’t stop thinking about. The only problem is, getting the oddity to relate to the brand and keeping the customer from only remembering the oddity.
- Skittles** (Taste the Rainbow) – Boy throwing candy through a girls window. Everyone enjoying candy Girl, Mom, Dad, Policeman, burglar and groundhog. You’re not quite sure of the message, but think of the rainbow.
  - T-Mobile** (Saving Something Special For You) – A takeoff of 50 Shades of Gray, this customer has great excitement over being charged for extra taxes and fees. Punishment for using too much data.
  - Lexus** (Man and Machine) – Dancer performs while they introduction of the new Lexus LC, with shots showing ‘half man, half machine,’ trying to show that the car inspires human emotion.
  - TurboTax** (Humpty Dumpty) – This story started during the AFC Championship game on January 22, 2017, when Humpty Dumpty was doing his taxes on a wall. Now, he’s in the hospital trying to ask about expenses.
  - GoDaddy** (The Internet Wants You) – Man represents the parts of the internet as he gets up in the morning. From thousands of letters flying in his window to cats riding on robot vacuums and every other common sight on the internet, the intent is to get you to create your own site.
  - Farm Ideas** – What can you do that’s out of your norm, but doesn’t scare off customers? Do you have odd vegetables from the past that resemble something? That might create some intrigue for your customers. Can you put goats into human situations to create something odd enough to draw people’s interest so they will search for your business online? Getting WAY out of the box can work, but getting the customer to remember it is really about your brand is very difficult.
6. **Celebrities** – The power of celebrity can be a good thing or a bad thing. It is never a guarantee. We saw celebrities make appearances for the presidential campaign, with what some would say was a negative backlash at the polls. But, with the right combination of a celebrity and a product, magic sometimes happens.
- Honda** (Power of Dreams) – A yearbook with Tina Fey, Robert Redford, Amy Adams, Magic Johnson, Steve Carell, Missy Elliot, Stan Lee, Jimmy Kimmel and Viola Davis talked to us about overcoming obstacles. This commercial ranked in top 10 of USA Today’s Ad Meter.
  - T-Mobile** (Unlimited Moves ) – Justin Bieber, Gronk and TO, show off touchdown moves. This commercial was visually stimulating and captured viewer attention. But, did it draw in the brand enough to be effective?
  - T-Mobile** (Bag of Unlimited) – Stars Martha Stewart and Snoop Dogg teamed up to avoid saying marijuana while trying to get you to buy into the unlimited plans for your smart phone.
  - Coca-Cola** (Sprite LeBron James) – He refused to tell us to drink Sprite.
  - Bai** (Gentlemen) – The company released teasers in advance of the game to let us know that Timberlake was coming, but Walken was a big Surprise. (Last year, Christopher Walken came to the Super Bowl to advertise Hyundai – and sock puppets.) And honestly, we can’t imagine anything much more hilarious than Walken singing that famous song “Bai!Bai!Bai!”
  - Tiffany** (Introducing Lady Gaga for Tiffany HardWear) – Being a rebellion and challenge the status quo is the focus of her monologue. She wants you to unafraid to tell people you are creative and to tell people, “I’m coming for you.”



- g. **Wix.com** (Action) – This commercial features Gal Gadot and Jason Statham. Havoc inside a restaurant inspires the chef to start, gourmet to go.
  - h. **Persil** (The Professional) – The star was Bill Nye the Science Guy as the stain-fighting superhero.
  - i. **Farm Ideas** – Are there any local celebrities that can inspire others to connect to your brand? Is there anyone at your farm that’s considered an expert in growing, fun or entertainment? You can create your own celebrity by being known as the ‘corn king’ or ‘maze master’ or nearly anything else. Work through a plan to make this happen and record videos for social media to make the plan happen. Maybe even a spoof of a celebrity would work in your marketing. When considering this, be sure to check with copyright and image use to avoid legal issues.
7. **Companies using teasers for Social Media** – Definitely not a new trend, but one that continues to ebb and flow the past few years.
- a. **Kia** (Eco warrior, #smarterway) – The commercial has Melissa McCarthy saving the planet as an eco-warrior. Although you may have thought this commercial was about humor, it was a success for being in the right place at the right time with the right celebrity hosting a popular Saturday Night Live broadcast the night before. But, what Kia was going for is follow up and connection. Before they released the ad itself, Kia released four teasers for the ad. The run, Roadside assistance, Kia Niro and needs vs wants. This was the #1 commercial on USA today’s ad meter.
  - b. **Hyundai** (This year, some of the better moments of the Super Bowl won’t only happen on the field) – They filmed the entire 90-second Hyundai Super Bowl commercial during the game, at a US military base in Zagan, Poland. The ad was played after the final play. Before the game, they teased the commercial with Joe Montana talking about leadership and Mike Singletary talking about team both ending with the tag line. Soldiers sat inside a pod surrounded by screens projecting their families in real time. The emotional connection created goodwill...and lots of searches for Hyundai.
  - c. **Tide** – Commercial starred Terry Bradshaw with barbecue sauce on his shirt. The teasers starred Rob Gronkowski and Jeffrey Tambor. The aim was to get you to want more.
  - d. **Farm Ideas** – What can you do to tell people about your farm, but leave them wanting to find out more? Are you planning hashtags for your farm and for specific things on your farm? Are you researching your ideas to be sure nobody else is using them? Are you using #instagram when everyone else is? Try searching Instagram for pictures and mentions of your business. You might be surprised at what you find. Take a class in social media to be sure you are doing it right and get in the game. Work through a social media plan for different promotions for the year. Use text on photos and on videos using hashtags so customers can follow up on social media.
8. **Humor** – Humor is always great. But, there is a fine line between laughing and being offended. We think this year’s ads did a great job sticking to basic humor.
- a. **Avocados From Mexico** (Secret Society meeting) – Highlighted good fats and the healthy side of avocados, using some humor and laughing at subliminal messages.
  - b. **Ford** (Go Further) –The highlight was several people stuck in crazy situations from a ski lift to stuck in a wrestling hold. The message here is that Ford is here to help us in the future with innovative products like self-driving cars and electric bikes. This was a top 10 in USA Today’s Ad Meter.
  - c. **Snickers** (Old West) – Live ad with details from Super Bowl LI, goes awry, “You ruin Superbowl Commercials when you’re hungry. While funny, this wasn’t as funny as some of the previous versions of this campaign.
  - d. **Amazon** (Alexa) – Humor to show how Alexa makes life easier life at home, including Alec Baldwin joking about no soft cheese – and no soft footballs at this year’s game.
  - e. **Farm Ideas** – Brainstorm about what is funny at your farm. Is being lost in the maze funny? Is accidentally painting a pumpkin face upside down funny? Think of the best ways to incorporate humor into your marketing – from funny photos and videos on Facebook to making people laugh when they show up at your door (in a good way!)

