

# Marketing Lessons from the 2021 Super Bowl<sup>1</sup>

## With applications for Direct Food & Ag Marketing Businesses

Super Bowl LV was again one for the record books, with the smallest stadium crowd ever, the lowest TV rating in fifteen years and the first one to be played in a home stadium. Many would say it solidifies Tom Brady's GOAT status even further.

The ratings and big swings in who advertised in 2021 shows us that uncertainty may be the driver of many aspects of marketing. It also says something about what is going on with our customer base today. People's lives are uprooted. Consumer habits are being changed forever, we are just not sure what forever means. Gauging consumer trends has been difficult this year due to the speed of change.

Advertising changes were big. Ford advertised in the playoffs, but not the big game. Budweiser did not market their core product, but instead focused on public service announcements for COVID-19 vaccinations. Pepsi did the half time show but did not purchase ad time.

Each year, the commercials give us a bearing for where marketing is going on a large scale. It sets the tone for marketing in the coming year and helps smaller businesses gauge what marketing firms with great data know. So, with a keen eye on the ads, we watched for trends and gave lots of thought to translate trends to direct farm marketing in the coming year.

As you review our analysis of trends, consider these questions for 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 to use them?

### Overall Observations

1. As always, they were engaging. The entertainment value was maximized with lots of nostalgia.
2. Some commercials reflected the past year.
3. Diversity was evident in nearly every commercial.
4. Emotion was evident, symbolizing the feel of 2020. Most connected the product with emotion.
5. Some look at strong relationships with community.
6. Commercials focused on changing the world.
7. We saw how to live in the virtual world.
8. Even the ones that focused on just entertaining us brought us familiar faces.

1. **Diversity** – The death of George Floyd brought racism, diversity and equality to the forefront. The American public is demanding businesses change their ways and get serious about these issues. More and more attention is being paid towards representations of diversity in all aspects of a company's marketing.
  - a. **Alexa** – This ad switched traditional Super Bowl commercial gender stereotypes.
  - b. **Dr Squatch** - Played on Super bowl stereotypes but added other elements (braiding hair, smell).
  - c. **E-trade** - A male gets motivation which comes from a female. He 'thinks' he has progress.
  - d. **Farm Ideas** – Think about all aspects of diversity when marketing the farm in the coming year. Are you addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion at the farm level? Do your advertisements, social media photos and post show diverse clientele? What needs addressed in hiring, etc.?

<sup>1</sup> By Rob Leeds and Eric Barrett, OSU Extension.  
Ohio Direct Food and Ag Marketing Team.



2. **Relationships & Community** – Including nature, local shops, your workplace and the joy of the chase. Others looked at relationship with others around us. Telling us we need each other, encouraging us to believe in ourselves, come together, say we are sorry, embrace differences and enjoy our family (even with a little trash talking).
  - a. **Bass Pro Shop** - Get back to nature. Healing after 2020. Get back to the basics – being with each other. Focus on relationships.
  - b. **Doordash** - Buying local and keeping relationships with community.
  - c. **Uber Eats** – Eat local. Support the familiar.
  - d. **Weathertech**- family at work
  - e. **Farm Ideas** – Think about ways to make new partnerships with other local businesses to help each other gain new customers and get the support of your local community. How do you give back to the community? What do you support in your community? Are you engaged with community partners? What other businesses do you partner with? What can you do to help support other local businesses?
3. **Staying at Home/Being Happy with Yourself** - Making the best of the home landscape, getting along with the people in our household, getting back to normal, embracing passions, and living up to your potential.
  - a. **Cheetos**- It wasn't me – and he believes it! Being at home together. New ways to get along.
  - b. **Doritos**- Getting back to normal.
  - c. **Scott's Miracle Grow** – Celebs show off their backyards. Loving your backyard.
  - d. **Farm Ideas** – Farms are part of the fabric of the nation. Our farms remind consumers about their roots, their memories, their traditions, and being connected to their families and friends. How do we welcome people back and make customers feel normal again? Can you focus on the traditions, with necessary changes in place?
4. **Human Connections** – We need each other. Connecting at an emotional level always improves marketing. Caring about people at a human level is ultimately important. We are all in this together!
  - a. **Anheuser Busch** – We need each other. Relationships are critical
  - b. **Bud Light** - Last year's lemons, making fun of 2020 (we are in this together)
  - c. **Jeep** - The middle, getting to the middle need connection Relationships.
  - d. **M&Ms** - Come together. Saying you're sorry.
  - e. **Farm Ideas** – Focus on treating people as individuals. Treat everyone as a VIP – very individual person. Offer more intimate, individual experiences for those who are most concerned about personal safety. Consider making timed ticketing a permanent thing for the farm. This makes things more personable and reduces crowds.
5. **Change the World!** – We need to break stereotypes, fight the uphill battle, welcome new people to the world and use technology to make a better world.
  - a. **Chipotle** - Can a burrito change the world? Change to a better world. Be healthy.
  - b. **Oatly** – Wow, no cow. Healthy?! Controversial?! It started lots of conversations.
  - c. **Logitech** - Defy logic. Breaking stereotypes.
  - d. **Huggies** - Welcome to the world (cute kids).
  - e. **Toyota** – Adoption. Uphill battle. It will be amazing! Hope!
  - f. **Farm Ideas** – Break the stereotypes of a farm/farmer in a positive way. What are the farm stereotypes that need to be upended? Is your farm's story compelling? Are you remarkable in a positive way? What is your image on social media – modern or 20 years old?
6. **Virtual World** – Don't worry about the stresses of the real world. Embrace virtual learning. Embracing the virtual world.
  - a. **Verizon** - Samuel Jackson, 'Can't blame lag.'
  - b. **Turbotax** - Virtual learning
  - c. **Vroom** - Virtual car shopping



- d. **Farm Ideas** – Many of the changes due to the pandemic will not go away. This is one that is here to stay and must be embraced. How are you positioning your farm in the digital world? The digital generation wants to connect with you before they arrive at your farm. Does your farm look old and tired? Or, is the farm up to speed for the new customers looking at the farm?
- 7. **Entertaining & Memorable** – Tried and true methods still work when it comes to being funny, having the right star at the right time, connecting to something familiar, and hitting the right button on issues that resonate with your audience. Addressing issues, but not being divisive.
  - a. **Rocket Mortgage** - Pretty sure. Nostalgia.
  - b. **GM** - No Way Norway! Competition to get more EV in US.
  - c. **Jimmy Johns** - Sandwich war.
  - d. **Hellmanns** - Fairy Godmayo.
  - e. **Farm Ideas** - In your marketing mix, do not be afraid to stay with tried and true methods. Saying this, diversity and other considerations are a must in using these methods. Continue to connect with existing, long-time customers while reaching new customers to ensure the survival of the business for the next generation.

