

Super Bowl XLIV Ad Quiz: 30 Brands. 30 One-Second Ads. How Many Can You Spot?

By Ken Carbone Fri Feb 5, 2010

What do you do if you want to advertise on the Big Game but only have a \$100,000 ad budget? Try a one-second “blink” ad. It’s a daunting design challenge to get a powerful brand message to stick.



Seventy-five thousand fans will jam into the Sun Life Stadium on Sunday to watch the New Orleans Saints and Indianapolis Colts compete for the Super Bowl ring. If you can't afford the obscene ticket price, you can join

the other hundred million who will be in their living room or man cave glued to an HDTV with guacamole, chips and six pack in hand, cheering on their favorite... commercials.

That's right, 51% of the Super Bowl audience tunes in mainly for the commercials, according to Nielsen's Homescan survey. Advertisers know this and pay a fortune to get eyeballs on their brands. What's the winning formula for a \$3 million 30-second spot? Cast a sexy model, some college dudes and lots of beer. Done.

If you only have a \$100,000 ad budget, try a one-second “blink” ad. It's a daunting design challenge to get a powerful brand message to stick. The incredibly brave Master Lock blink ad that ran ten years ago during Super Bowl XXXIV, is legendary and very “pre-Gladwellian.” This echoed their broader advertising strategy and served as a powerful reinforcement of their brand message.



Last year, Miller Beer used the same approach during the Super Bowl with equal simplicity and effectiveness.



Is this novel advertising strategy right for all brands? What about emerging brands and start-ups? I asked David Halperin, a media consultant and founder of Criterion Global. He believes “a blink ad works best for well known brands that have a firm foundation in the consumer consciousness or when used to leverage a broader campaign. For an unknown brand, a provocative blink ad that steers you to a Web site might work, perhaps as part of a contest or promotion.” But he cautions that you must make that “one-second idea, riveting.”

So which of today’s great brands can survive the blink test? Using this model I’ve composed this “30-second spot” showing thirty brands from various categories to see how many their logo designs are identifiable. Most are well known and have been stamped into our brains with zillions of impressions. So, as an added challenge, I’ve intentionally cropped the logos to the brink of recognition. How many can you identify? Impress your friends at half time with your brand acuity (or just scroll to the very bottom of this post for the answers). Just don’t turn it into a drinking game.



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Ken Carbone is among America's most respected graphic designers, whose work is renowned for its clarity and intelligence. He has built an international reputation creating outstanding programs for world-class clients, including Tiffany & Co., WL Gore, Herman Miller, PBS, Christie's, Nonesuch Records, the W Hotel Group, and The Taubman Company. His clients also include celebrated cultural institutions such as the Musée du Louvre, The Museum of Modern Art, The Pierpont Morgan Library, The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the High Museum of Art.

Answers, in order of appearance: Fed Ex, Burger King, Bank of America, Motorola, NBC, Jaguar, Kraft, KFC, BP, Budweiser, Michelin, Lacoste, Sprint, United Way, Ben & Jerry's, MySpace, Cisco, Under Armor, GE, Blackberry, UPS, Tivo, Dodge Ram, Walmart, Wendy's, Unilever, Dunkin' Donuts, Firefox, Pringles, Target

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