

# VILLANOVA

## SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

————— *Super Bowl Ad Report 2016* —————

**Celebrities v. Animals**

**JANUARY 2016**

# Best & Worst Celebrity & Animal Super Bowl Ads

There's no question that the ads are a big part of the Super Bowl experience—for many, more important than the game itself. And with a \$5 million price tag for a 30-second ad for Super Bowl 50, the ads certainly don't come cheap. While they may change from year-to-year, celebrity and animal ads are two tried-and-true tactics used by marketers every year to generate buzz.

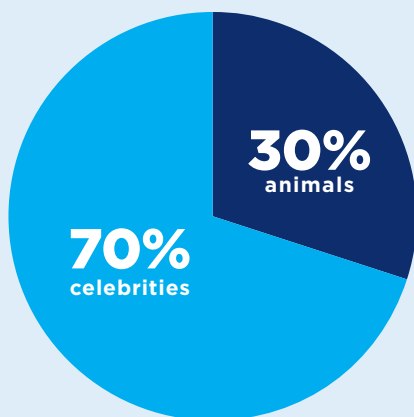
Charles R. Taylor, PhD, and the John A. Murphy Professor of Marketing at the Villanova School of Business and a nationally known expert on advertising and marketing, decided to examine the effectiveness of Super Bowl advertising and supervised 55 undergraduate business students in an exhaustive content analysis of animal v. celebrity Super Bowl ads over the past five years. The students (aged 18-22) also conducted a longitudinal examination of the best and worst celebrity and animal ads of all time through content analysis, aggregation of critics ratings and their own in-depth analysis.



# Celebrity v. Animal Ads Over The Past Five Years

The students observed a **slight increase in the number of ads using celebrities over the past five years concurrent with a slight decrease in the number of ads using animals.**

Overall, the students found that celebrity endorsers are used in more than twice as many ads in comparison to animals.



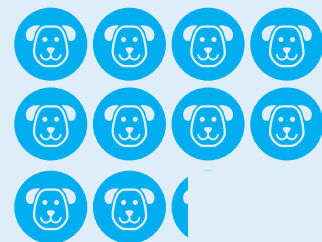
CELEBRITIES


**98**  
ads

v.

ANIMALS

**41**  
ads



 = 4 ADS

# Use of Celebrities

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NUMBER OF CELEBRITIES USED  
IN SUPER BOWL ADVERTISING  
OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS\*

*\*Average student estimate*

The students observed that celebrity endorsements are the dominant approach used in Super Bowl advertising in the last five years, but that the results of ads featuring celebrities are all over the map, and average somewhat lower likeability and effectiveness ratings than other ads. They emphasized, however, that some celebrity ads can be highly effective.

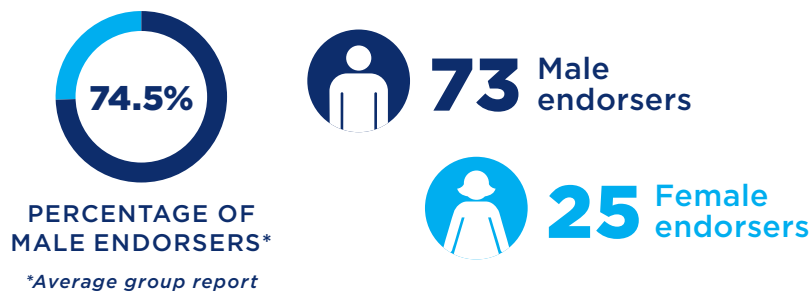
As one student group put it:

*“Time and time again, through our research we found many disclaimers against the utilization of celebrities in Super Bowl ads. Celebrities are polarizing in that they often appeal to only one demographic segment and worse—could possibly offend another. This is particularly important to keep in mind as the audience of Super Bowl viewers is a representation of the general population. This is not to say that if done properly, including the right celebrities in the right storyline with the right message may increase ad likeability, social media buzz and overall effectiveness of Super Bowl ads. In practice, however, this is often not the case.”*

## CONCLUSION

*Celebrity ads can work but just inserting any celebrity into an ad is a recipe for below average performance. It is essential that they fit with the brand and message.*

# Gender of Celebrity Endorsers



Some students speculated that the high use of male endorsers is because the demographic for NFL football skews male—though this is not as much the case for the Super Bowl compared to the rest of the football season.

A few student groups observed that ads featuring male celebrities were more effective than ads featuring females based on rankings data, but only slightly so.

Another group noted that most commercials using female celebrities used them to reinforce a sexual appeal, including:



## CONCLUSION

Male celebrities account for 75% of celebrity endorsements in the Super Bowl. This is the case in spite of relatively even demographics. Analysis shows only slightly higher average effectiveness of ads with male celebrities, perhaps being suggestive of more opportunity to use female celebrities effectively.

# Athletes v. Show Business



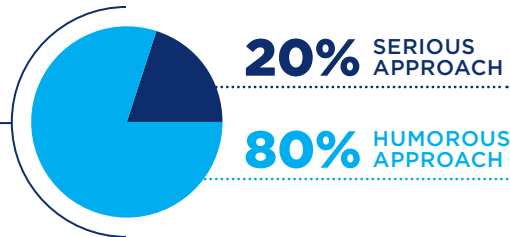
The students found that ads featuring show business celebrity endorsers were, on average, more effective than ads with athlete endorsers over the past five years.

## CONCLUSION

Show business celebrity endorsers, on average, outperformed athlete endorsers over the past five years.

# Serious v. Humorous Celebrity Ads

## ADS THAT FEATURE CELEBRITIES:



In terms of effectiveness ratings—not just likeability, but broader effectiveness measures—the students found that the serious ads performed better on average, but cautioned that this was based on a relatively low overall number of serious ads.

## CONCLUSION

A humorous approach is used more often than a serious one but that doesn't mean they're more effective.

# Frequency of Dogs v. Cats v. Other Animals

41

TOTAL ADS USED ANIMALS OVER THE PAST 5 SUPER BOWLS

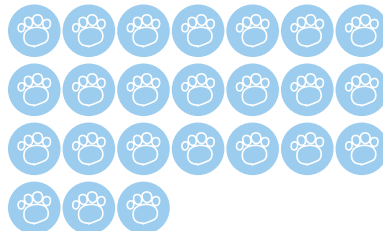
## 14 DOG ADS



## 5 CAT ADS



## 24 ADS WITH OTHER ANIMALS



Dogs were used more frequently than cats. Dog ads outperformed those for cats and other animals, but this varied by year. As one group put it:

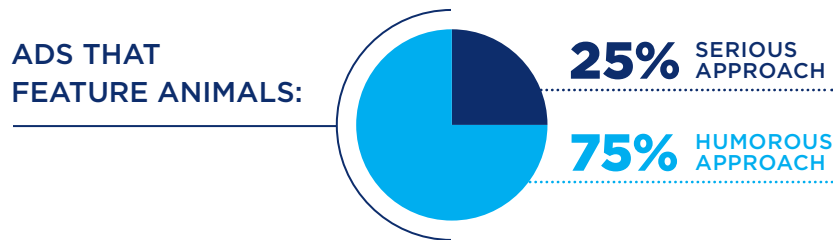
*"...commercials featuring dogs performed better than those featuring other animals. However, there were certain years, 2012 and 2013, specifically, where almost all ads featuring animals fared badly relative to other ads."*

## CONCLUSION

Dogs are used more often than cats, and often with high levels of success. While acknowledging the sample size is small, the students think dogs are the champs as animals used in Super Bowl ads.

# Serious v. Humorous Approach in Animal Ads

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Serious ads were rated higher on average but this was largely due to the runaway success of some of the recent Budweiser ads. As one group put it:

*"The fact that 80% of the serious ads were produced by Budweiser proves the company has a gift for crating captivating advertisements because of the 80%, 75% of the ads were ranked number one in 2013, 2014, and 2015. Therefore, serious ads have scored higher because they stir up conversation and allow the audience to relate to the emotion that is compelled through the ad."*

## CONCLUSION

Humor is used considerably more often than a serious approach in animal ads, but the Budweiser ads demonstrate that serious ads can be effective.

# Best Celebrity Ads of All Time

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1

## 2010 | Snickers

Betty White/Abe Vigoda  
*You're not you when you're hungry*



2

## 1993 | McDonald's

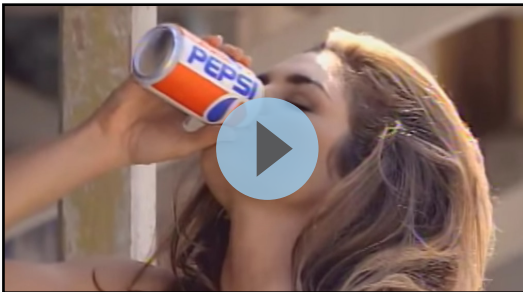
The Showdown  
*Jordan, Bird*



3

## 1992 | Pepsi

Vending Machine  
*Cindy Crawford*



4

## 1992 | Nike

Hare Jordan  
*Bugs Bunny*





5

**1979 | Coke**

Hey Kid, Catch  
*Mean Joe Green*



6

**1991 | Diet Pepsi**

Ray Charles  
*You've got the right one baby uh huh*



7

**2012 | Honda**

Matthew's Day Off



8

**2011 | Chrysler**

Born of Fire  
*Eminem*



9

**2012 | Chrysler**

Halftime in America  
*Clint Eastwood*



10

**2015 | Clash of Clans**

Liam Neeson



## Honorable Mentions

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### 2014 | Bud Light

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Up for Whatever  
*Arnold, Cheadle, Minka K.*

### 2015 | Snickers

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Brady Bunch

## Key Findings

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#### LONG LASTING IMPACT .....

This list suggests ultra-successful, all-time classic celebrity ads have a more long-lasting impact in terms of their memorability.

#### EARLY “CLASSIC” ADS RANK HIGH .....

In comparison to the students list of best animal ads, fewer of the highest ranked ads are from very recent years with more “classics” ranked. Moreover, the top two ads were runaway leaders, and the top five on the list were consistently scored high by the groups.

#### ICONIC BRANDS RESONATE .....

All of the top six ads on this list are for truly iconic American brands that are a part of American pop culture: Snickers, McDonald’s, Nike, Coke and Pepsi/Diet Pepsi. This represents an opportunity for these brands when they use celebrities.

#### NOSTALGIA STANDS OUT .....

Honda’s “Matthew’s Day Off” featuring Matthew Broderick scored very well using a popular U.S. celebrity and an appeal to nostalgia.

#### THEMED MATCHES WORK WELL .....

Chrysler’s placement on the list with its 2011 and 2012 ads is impressive and indicative of a good match of the celebrity to the theme of the ad. Eminem is from Detroit and edgy, hence “Imported from Detroit” connected with a young audience.

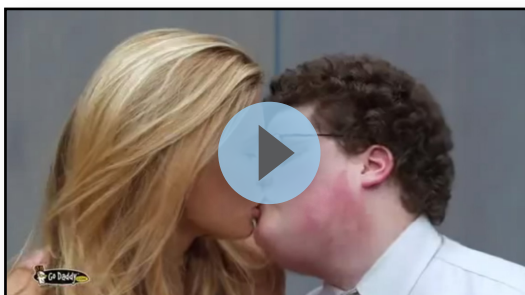
# Worst Celebrity Ads of All Time

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1

## 2013 | GoDaddy

Smart meets sexy with Bar Rafaeli



2

## 2011 | Groupon

Timothy Hutton  
*Save the money*



3

## 1997 | Dirt Devil

Fred Astaire



## Key Findings

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- The top two ads on this list won out by a wide margin, likely for different reasons.
- The GoDaddy ad depicted a supermodel kissing a “geeky” character for a long period of seconds, a tactic that while attention-getting, was not appealing to the audience.
- The Groupon ad was viewed as being insensitive to the poor, consistent with the theme of a need to show some level of social responsibility even when running an ad intended to be irreverent.
- Somehow, the pairing of Fred Astaire and a vacuum cleaner did not work well.

# Best Animal Ads of All Time

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1

**2013 | Budweiser**

Brotherhood



2

**2014 | Budweiser**

Puppy love



3

**2008 | Budweiser**

Dalmatian trains Clydesdale to make beer wagon team



5

**1994 | Pepsi**

A chimp experiment gone awry



**2015 | Budweiser**

Lost dog



6

**1998 | Pepsi**

Flying geese



8

**2004 | Bud Light**

Owners demonstrate how their dogs fetch Bud Light

**1995 | Budweiser**

Frogs



10

**2003 | Budweiser**

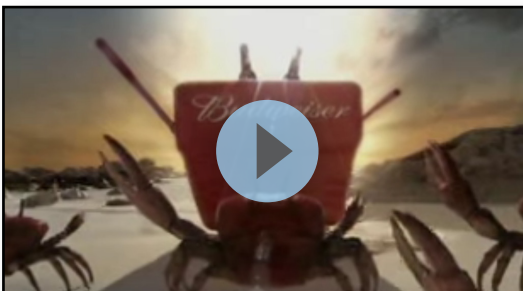
Replay

*Clydesdales turn to zebra referee*

9

**2007 | Budweiser**

Crabs worship Bud ice chest

**1997 | Pepsi**

Bear dance





## Honorable Mentions

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### 2000 | E-trade

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Monkey

### 2015 | Doritos

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Dog bribes cat owner

### 2015 | Bud Light

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Here we go

## Key Findings

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### **BUDWEISER & PEPSI ARE TOPS**



All of the tops ads were either for Budweiser or for Pepsi. Of the top ten ads (11 listed due to ties), eight were for Budweiser or Bud Light, and the other three were all for Pepsi.

### **ANIMALS ARE EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE**



The students believed that these companies are extremely effective in the creative use of animals to connect with consumers on the Super Bowl. One wonders why Pepsi has not consistently used animals in its advertising over the years.

### **CLASSIC ADS RESONATE**



Because the students doing the ratings were born in the mid-1990s, the numbers appear to reflect some recent bias. However, the students do pick up some of the classics and the results are reflective of Budweiser running exceptionally effective ads using animals over the past three Super Bowls. This finding demonstrates the iconic status of the Budweiser Clydesdales combined with the use of highly effective creative strategy.

# Worst Animal Ads of All Time

1

**2008 | Sales Genie**

Panda



2

**2015 | GoDaddy**

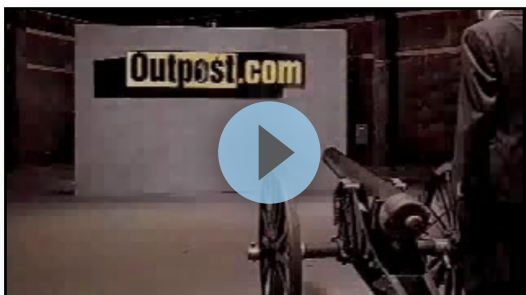
Puppy mill



3

**1998 | Outpost.com**

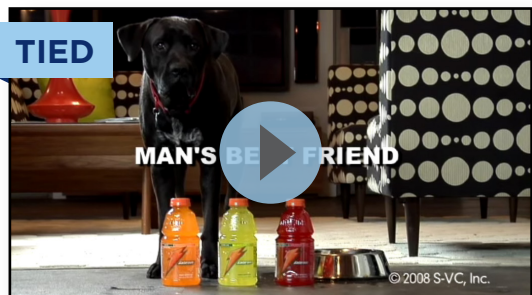
Gerbil canon



4

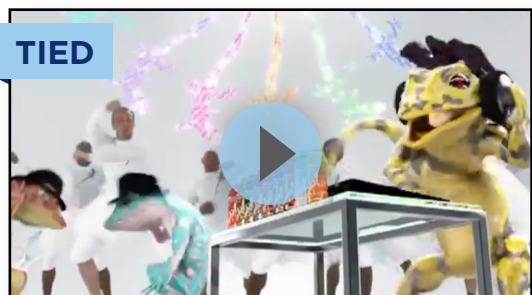
**2008 | Gatorade**

Dog



**2008 | SoBe**

Lizard lake



# Key Findings

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## **EDGY ADS INEFFECTIVE**



One commonality is that these ads are generally offbeat or edgy in some way. For example, Sales Genie’s “Panda” was accused of invoking stereotypes of Asians, while Gatorade’s “Dog” showed a canine drinking Gatorade using the tagline “Man’s Best Friend.” Advertisers should have really known that these specific uses of animals would not be effective.

## **“PUPPY MILL” AD MAKES LIST**



GoDaddy’s “Puppy Mill” made the list even though it did not actually appear on the Super Bowl—rather it was a highly publicized rejected ad.





## About Villanova School of Business

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**The Villanova School of Business (VSB)** has been at the forefront of business education since it was founded in 1922. Serving over 2,500 undergraduate and graduate students, VSB is home to **six Institutes and Centers of Excellence** (the Daniel M. DiLella Center for Real Estate, the Center for Business Analytics, the Center for Global Leadership, the Center for Marketing & Consumer Insights, the Center for Church Management & Business Ethics and the Institute for Innovation, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship (ICE) Institute) with each center designed to foster innovative, cross-disciplinary research and teaching opportunities for business faculty. **VSB is known for academic rigor; creativity and innovation; hands-on and service learning opportunities; a firm grounding in ethics; and an applied education** that prepares students to become outstanding leaders and global citizens within the ever-changing, complex, and fast-paced world of business.

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