



WHY THE BIGGEST EVENT STAGES ARE BECOMING A TRUST PLAY FOR B2B ADS

Learnings from Super Bowl LX

March 2026

Authors:
Kristyna Kanzler
Ryan Mitchell
Lisa Sobilo



KEY FINDINGS:

1. **Showing Up (Meaningfully) in Tentpole Events Can Help Ensure You Make the B2B Shortlist**

Moments like the Super Bowl can help build mental availability and trust at scale for B2B companies – critical when only a few brands make buyers' shortlists

2. **Scale Can Signal Safety & Familiarity**

In committee-led enterprise decisions, big-stage presence can communicate credibility, permanence, and reduced risk

3. **Saliency Opens the Door, Proof Closes the Deal**

Cultural saliency earns a spot on the radar, but clear benefits and compelling reasons to believe can help convert fame into trust and selection

4. **Creative Discipline Maximizes ROI**

Sharper creative briefs, stronger branded attention, and validated messaging can ensure these campaign investments deliver measurable business impact, and not just buzz



B2B Brands Presence in Big Events

Learnings from Ipsos Creative Spark and the Ipsos Business Insights Collective community on B2B best practices in big event advertising



In the wake of the Super Bowl, a moment that once again demonstrated the power of cultural tentpoles to capture massive attention, B2B marketers should be looking ahead to the next opportunities to show up meaningfully. With upcoming events like NCAA March Madness & the FIFA World Cup, as well as annual award shows, now is the moment to consider how B2B brands can use these shared cultural stages to build trust, drive mental availability, and ensure their creative investments truly land.

Why would a B2B company pay for one of the most expensive media moments on earth... to reach people who mostly aren't buyers? When viewed through a CFO lens, skepticism would be a natural response - \$8M for 30 seconds aimed at 125+ million people, most of whom will never buy enterprise B2B software? Sounds irresponsible on the surface. But there can be real, defensible benefits if there's clarity about what problem the spend is actually solving.

When a B2B purchasing cycle starts, the short-list is shockingly small - with companies only considering an average of 3 brands¹. The Super Bowl - and other big tentpole sporting events like it - isn't about generating immediate leads. It's about building mental availability, which is everything when it comes to making it into a buyer's limited consideration set.

¹Source: Ipsos B2B Buying Journey Report (2025)



Over the past five to six years, more B2B brands have embraced sports sponsorship to build attention and cultural currency. But the brands that win don't stop at attention. They reinforce that familiarity in professional environments, where credibility is earned and buying confidence is formed, converting awareness into preference and growth."

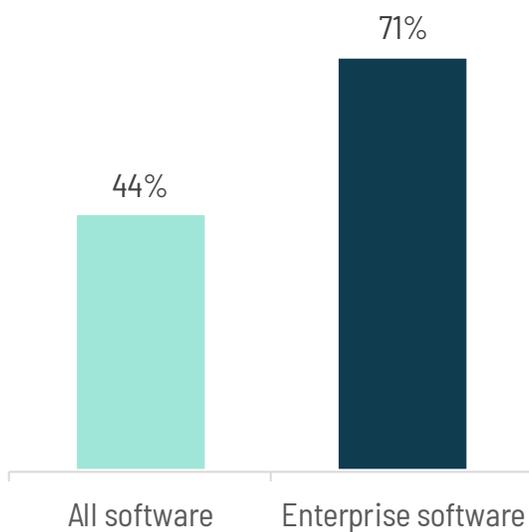
- Vita Molis, Head of Editorial, B2B Institute LinkedIn

The Rise of B2B Brand Campaigns

The recent trend of B2B companies taking part in the biggest day in advertising isn't totally new – Xerox advertised in the big game back in 1977, almost 50 years ago.

The spot featured a monk using a Xerox copier to quickly produce hundreds of handwritten scripts. The creative used a humorous approach to highlight the benefits of high-speed, automated and collated copying, effectively changing how businesses handled document duplication. The investment back then for a spot was a mere \$125k (with inflation, we're talking ~\$650k today). Was Xerox ahead of its time in realizing the potential ROI of investing in a Super Bowl spot? In retrospect, they would likely claim to have had that foresight.

B2B software buying decisions made by committees



²Source: Ipsos B2B Buying Journey Report (2025)

Despite the Super Bowl's broad audience, B2B brands can reach the right people, even if it's indirect. We know enterprise decisions are no longer made in isolation and the amount of decision makers involved in the buying process has continued to grow over the past decade. The platform of the Super Bowl reaches the entire ecosystem: current and future executives, board members, investors, analysts, and even the spouses and peers who influence them. Broad-reaching campaigns are more critical than ever because, as our 2025 B2B Buyer Journey research shows, the days of the solo purchase are gone. Even seemingly simple buying decisions now often "take a village," with 44% of all software purchases, and a staggering 71% of enterprise software decisions, made by these expanded buying committees².

To understand the real-world impact of these massive investments, we turned to the Ipsos Business Insights Collective (BIC), an always-on online community of 200+ validated US business and marketing decision-makers who provide real-time feedback on global B2B strategies. The consensus was clear, while scale gets you on the radar, the product proof points keep you there. As one executive member in the Business Insights Collective community noted:

"Seeing a B2B brand on a global stage signals scale and credibility, which makes me more likely to include them in a future RFP, provided I can clearly see how their specific benefits solve my immediate business needs"

Trust is the Key

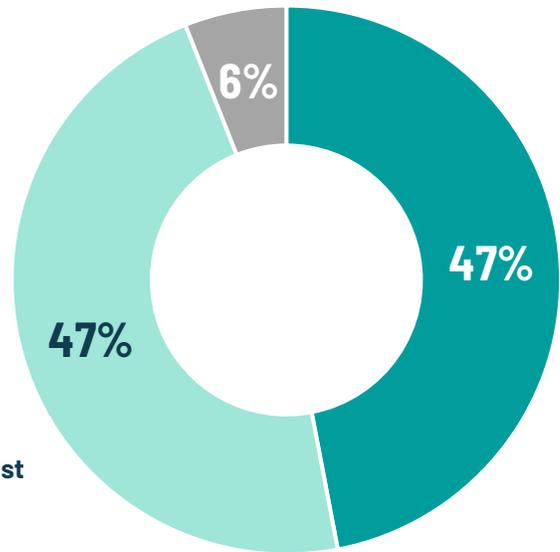
While creative flair can help secure the spotlight, the long-term game is won by cementing your brand as a trusted frontrunner that delivers functional promises long before the formal buying process begins.

Ipsos and LinkedIn's partnership on the latest edition of the B2B Benchmark Report uncovered that nearly all B2B marketers agree that trust is a primary KPI to B2B success.

94%
of marketers agree that trust is the key to B2B success.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Don't Agree/ Neutral

Q. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Building trust is the MOST important factor for achieving success as a B2B brand?**



Furthermore, 42% of B2B marketers ranked increasing brand awareness and reputation among decision makers as their top business priority, more than any other option. In this context, brand scale can signal company scale and ladder up to trust. And a Super Bowl ad coming from a B2B brand can send an unmissable signal that we're here, we're financially strong and we're not going away.

Source Methodology: Ipsos collected a sample of 1,500 participants using a strategic blend of 70% expert network sample and 30% B2B panel providers. Participants completed a 20-minute device-agnostic survey, accessible on both mobile and desktop platforms. The primary focus of the study was to explore and analyze the challenges faced by senior-level B2B marketers. The sample was distributed across countries as follows: United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, India and Australia (n=250 each)

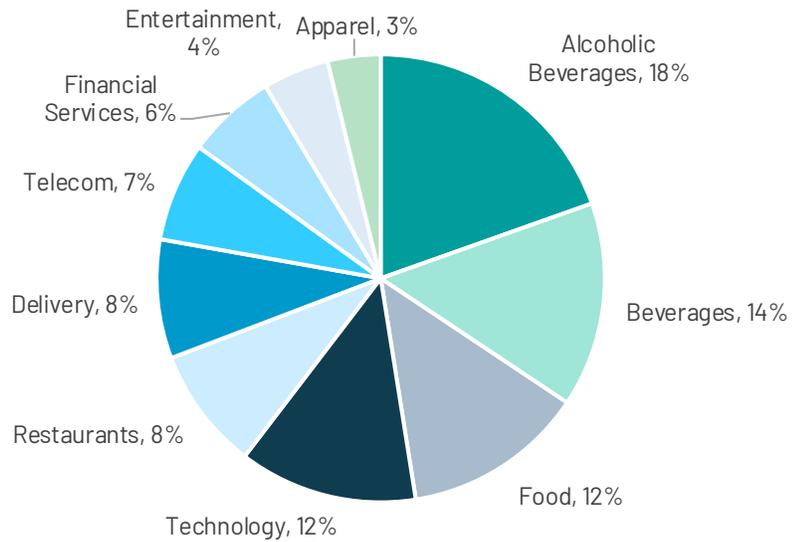




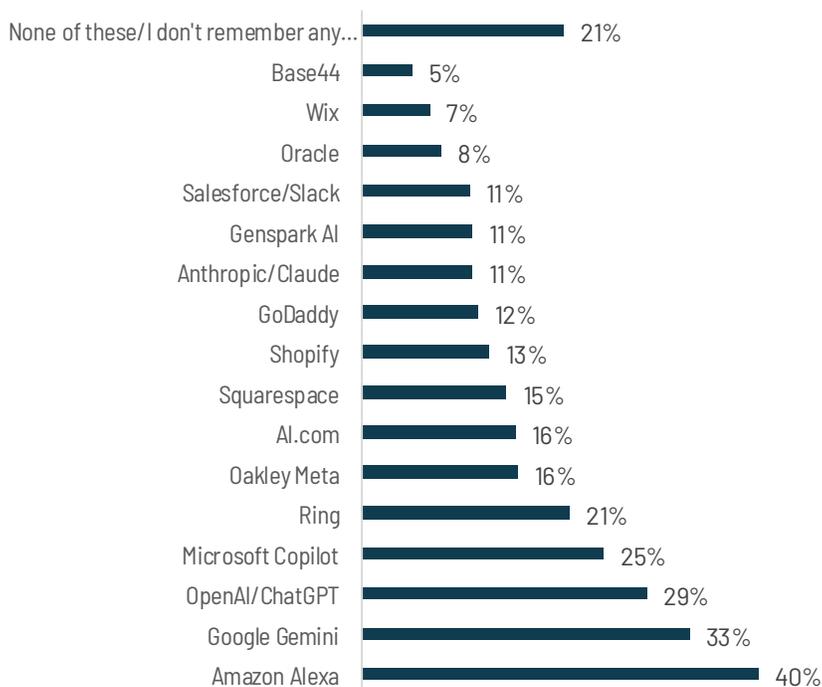
How Did the 2026 B2B Super Bowl Ads Perform?

Super Bowl LX saw an influx of tech companies vying for viewers' attention. Using Ipsos FastFacts online survey platform, we probed consumers the day after the game to gauge residual memories of which brand(s) they remembered seeing ads for. The technology category as a whole garnered about 12% of all unaided playback, which was on par with Food & Bev and Alcoholic Beverages, the traditional staples of Super Bowl advertising.

Super Bowl 2026 Top Recalled Categories



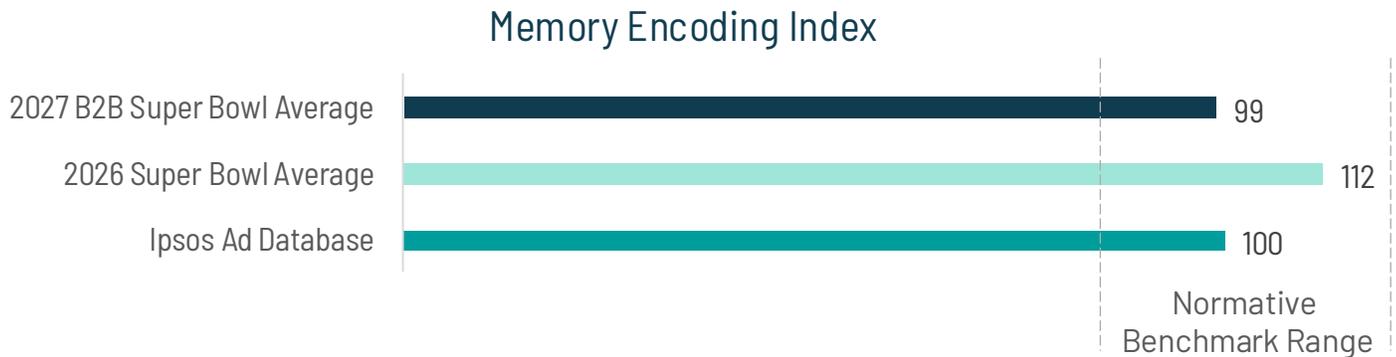
Tech Companies - Aided Awareness



When we probed on an aided basis within the context of Tech, it's clear that the AI product spots were driving the majority of recall. Effective creative must do two things: breakthrough in distracted environments while being correctly linked to the brand, as well as elicit a response from the audience that nudges some type of behavior. At Ipsos, we measure the first piece as Brand Attention. It is the foundation for all effective advertising, whether you're a legacy CPG brand or an upstart AI company looking to put yourself on the map.

B2B Brands Must Encode Memories

In addition to capturing ad recall the day after the game, we also tested this year's crop of Super Bowl ads with our flagship testing tool Creative|Spark among a broad Gen Pop audience to reflect viewership of the big game. Super Bowl ads typically outperform the average ad on memory encoding, the ad's ability to break through the clutter and capture attention. However, B2B advertisers fell short of this benchmark.



Source: Ipsos Creative|Spark solution (n150 per ad, U.S., ages 18-65); 9 B2B ads (including AI brands/products), 50 Super Bowl ads, compared to 17,900+ U.S. ad database

The exception? Squarespace. In its 12th appearance as a Super Bowl advertiser, the brand tapped Emma Stone this year to capture the anguish of failed attempts to register her name as a domain and beat the Super Bowl average overall with an index of 117.

Solid celebrity fit, combined with a tension build and stunning black-and-white cinematography contributed to a particularly memorable piece of creative for the brand, landing in the top third of our database for Memory Encoding potential. One respondent said,

"It caught my attention – at first it seemed scary but then I could feel and understand the frustration she was having by not getting the domain she wanted."

From our Ipsos creative learnings, celebrities can amplify effectiveness only when they serve the storyline and the brand's role clearly. This is where a real opportunity lies for B2B advertisers to get their own name across much more overtly for viewers.



Image source: The Official Squarespace Newsroom

Brand Linkage for B2B is Far Behind B2C

Contrary to popular belief, branding “early and often” isn’t the end all be all in generating strong linkage. Prioritizing a credible role for the brand to play and ensuring a seamless integration in the storyline has proven to be much more impactful.

There is also an opportunity for B2B brands to better identify and leverage distinctive brand assets. B2C brands have held a stark advantage over B2B on this creative amplifier for decades (i.e. the Clydesdales for Budweiser). We see from Ipsos’ ad testing database that B2B creatives are 3x less likely to have distinctive assets at their disposal. Yes, these can take some time to build up in-market, but it is an organic, ownable way to best signal your brand across various touchpoints and maximize the impact of big event advertising.

Brand Linkage Index



Source: Ipsos CreativeSpark solution (n150 per ad, U.S., ages 18-65); 9 B2B ads (including AI brands/products), 50 Super Bowl ads, compared to 17,900+ U.S. ad database



From Spotlight to Shortlist

While the Super Bowl offers a masterclass in storytelling, its true commercial value for B2B lies in converting cultural saliency into a "Safe Bet" status. In enterprise procurement, where stakeholders face significant professional risk, high-impact advertising signals financial permanence and category authority, factors that often act as silent tie-breakers in final purchase decisions. However, saliency alone is not a silver bullet; to move from a "famous" brand to a "purchased" one, brands must anchor that attention in traditional KPIs, functional benefits, and clear Reasons to Believe (RTBs).

Because B2B buyers are human at the end of the day, emotion, memory, and storytelling matter just as much as rational proof. By cementing residual memories of your brand in the minds of buyers, you effectively reduce perceived risk across the board. In enterprise sales, risk reduction has real financial value.

The Importance of Creative Strategy

Most B2B brands have no shortage of functional talking points to put in front of potential buyers. Instead, the category's challenge is to decide which ones to feature in a mere 30-60 seconds of runtime. This predicament is compounded by the fact that they are making a Super Bowl spot, which can be lighter in communication points than their everyday counterparts.

This year, B2B brands tended to take one of two approaches: dedicating their time to delivering one simple overall message with no mention of support points or complementing their message with a list of features or use cases. Ipsos tools like CreativeFuel Strategy Assessment can help B2B brands focus in on the fewest, most impactful communications points in order to leave room for the level of creativity expected from the Super Bowl and other marquee events.

Base44 Case Study

We used CreativeFuel to look at how one brand could have enhanced their results with creative grounded in research by assessing their positioning with real people. Despite signals of being a strong performer on brand KPI metrics, the following output shows how reviewing the most pressing prospect needs could've helped Base44 further hone their Super Bowl messaging, ensuring they touched on the points that were most relevant to their audience and leaving secondary messages for a different execution.

RELEVANT WORDS & PHRASES IN THE STRATEGY

I'd really like to **streamline** more work processes.

With Base44, anyone can create an **app** and get it live in minutes, even if they **can't code**.

Base44 is the **AI-powered** platform that lets users turn their words into personal productivity apps, back-office tools, customer portals, or complete enterprise products that are ready to use, no integrations required. Base44 **helps** people doing all kinds of tasks—including making financial reports, budgeting, inventory tracking, and training—make their work easier.

Base Size: n121.

Strategy was assumed and not provided by brand.

The research shows Base44 may have been better off spending more time on the primary benefit (streamlining the process) and perhaps a bit less time outlining all the different use cases.

Squarespace made this hard call, focusing solely on domain registration, and it paid off.



Turning Big Moments into Commercial Impact

Tentpole moments like the NCAA March Madness, the FIFA World Cup, and annual award shows aren't just consumer spectacles – they're rare, high-impact platforms for B2B brands to build trust and long-term mental availability at scale, which is crucial to making buyers' short lists.

These events concentrate attention, can unite decision-makers around shared cultural moments, and offer a stage where even complex brands can show up in an approachable manner.

That said, there remains opportunity for B2B brands to up their game creatively and ensure they get credit for their investment. Having a tighter brief upfront can help immensely to allow for more creative freedom and smarter decision making.

At Ipsos, we equip B2B marketers with the tools to help optimize creative, validate strategy, and maximize impact at every step of the campaign development process – so **bold moves become informed ones.**

Impactful B2B Big Event Advertising Checklist

- ❑ Consider TV ads in big events, even when not every viewer will be in your target audience. Showing up in a respected event allows all members of your buying committee to have the same exposure to your brand and increases collaborative trust during the sales process.
- ❑ Focus your message on the biggest pain point you solve, or most unique differentiator, using your prospects' own words from early stage creative research.
- ❑ Create a compelling storyline that will help breakthrough the sea of sameness of other advertisers taking part in the event. Strategic celebrity use, resolved tension, and unique formats can all help B2B brands to stand out. Engage research early to evaluate concepts before you spend on production to ensure your idea is a winner.
- ❑ Identifying and leveraging distinctive brand assets to increase mental availability so you are top-of-mind when your prospect enters the buying cycle. Testing your creative can help you optimize where your brand needs more visibility in the storyline.



AUTHORS

Kristyna Kanzler

Vice President, Ipsos Communities
kristyna.kanzler@ipsos.com

Ryan Mitchell

Senior Vice President, Ipsos Creative Excellence
ryan.mitchell@ipsos.com

Lisa Sobilo

Vice President, Ipsos Creative Excellence
lisa.sobilo@ipsos.com

ABOUT IPSOS

Ipsos is one of the largest market research and polling companies globally, operating in 90 markets and employing nearly 20,000 people. Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. Our 75 business solutions are based on primary data from our surveys, social media monitoring, and qualitative or observational techniques. "Game Changers" – our tagline – summarizes our ambition to help our 5,000 clients navigate with confidence our rapidly changing world. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has been listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1, 1999.

The company is part of the SBF 120, Mid-60 indices and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP

www.ipsos.com

35 rue du Val de Marne 75 628 Paris, Cedex 13 France

Tel. +33 1 41 98 90 00