
Ipsos NeuroTake on the Super Bowl LII Ads

An Ipsos Neuro Point of View
by Elissa Moses • February 2018



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Commentary by Elissa Moses, CEO, Ipsos Neuro and Behavioral Science Center

“The Super Bowl Is All About Excitement!”

There is extensive commentary on the Super Bowl 2018 ads, but few take an internal view of the consumer psyche when it comes to responding nonconsciously. Ipsos did a live audience Super Bowl Party/Study where a theater full of football fans were equipped with the latest Shimmer Biometric technology to capture their emotional reactions in real time. They ate, they drank (one beer per quarter), they came with friends and they texted naturally on social media. They hooted and hollered and let us know their reactions to every Super Bowl ad from the break before kick-off to the break after the final score.

The result is that we see a different pattern than in many of the surveys that report on conscious response to survey questions or with dials. This is because the GSR measure is in real time and quicker than our self-perceptions. If an ad excites us, whether we like it or not, the measures do not lie and similarly, for instance, if an ad is a well-intended “do gooder” but still a snooze, we can’t escape the revelation.

When we put our “Ipsos Super Score” together based on the biometrics, we took into consideration what a Super Bowl ad is supposed to do. Because not all ads have the same objectives. Some aim to reinforce preference, some have a call to action, others hope to change perceptions. And yet Super Bowl ads are in a class by themselves. Super Bowl ads aim to excite! The Super Bowl game is America’s biggest spectator competition (bigger than our elections) and the ads pit brand against brand as well. Coke vs. Pepsi; McDonald’s vs. Wendy’s and every brand against every other brand as they strive to get share of attention, emotion and buzz.

So, biometrics are an especially apt System 1 method for Super Bowl ad testing because, with the latest Shimmer advancements, they can measure a full audience simultaneously, provide in-context response (not just the Super Bowl ads, but viewed *during* the Super Bowl), aggregate data in real time and measure the essence of what drives a Super Bowl ad win from the perspective of measuring what is called technically arousal—in other words,

emotional response along an excitement continuum. This is not to say that biometrics can determine if people are persuaded to buy more Alexa’s or make more Ameritrade’s. But it is likely to predict if brands succeed at being top of mind and favorably perceived because they stirred the senses, made people laugh, shocked them or entertained. The way an ad “wins the Super Bowl,” and in doing so bestows public and professional respect upon the advertised brand, is through generating excitement as measured by GSR. This means at the beginning of the ad (“hook effect”), throughout the ad (“sustain effect”), at the end of the ad (“brand effect”)—super important because that’s when the brand almost always gets shown and ultimately can take that excitement to great heights (what we call the “max peak effect.”)

Hence when we look at the SB ads with the highest Ipsos Biometric Super Scores, we are acknowledging ads that did well on most of these aspects. Let’s look at the top performers from the 2018 game from a neuro perspective.

#1 Tide Ad **“It’s Yet Another Tide Ad”–** **Clydesdales & Mr. Clean–** **Ipsos Super Score 92.8**

This was the 3rd of four Tide ads throughout the game, and we suspect (based on overheard comments) that some didn’t completely understand the first one, initially. But by the time the 2nd or 3rd one came around, it seems that the audience was fully invested in the joke, and it did not fail to deliver. From the perspective of behavioral science, advertising strategy and neuro research, we conclude that this Tide campaign is a virtuoso as it succeeds at imprinting the audience with the brand and nudges viewers to think about Tide in ads that had nothing to do with Tide through the power of association. It proclaims that Tide stands for clean clothes and that every time viewers see clean clothes, they are seeing advertising for Tide. This is as if they were able to crystallize a distinctive brand asset on the spot. The campaign also simultaneously works on brand reinforcement for other P&G brands, all while causing peak arousal and deep laughter. Moreover, in a crowded ad field with ads of unusually long length (the Alexa ad was 90 seconds), Tide succeeded in winning against all the other ads on arousal with a 15 second ad. Additionally, it should be mentioned that two of the other Tide campaign ads placed in the top twenty ranking 7th and 12th respectively. What a campaign! Brilliant.

#2 NFL **“Touchdown Celebrations to Come”–** **“Dirty Dancing Spoof”–** **Ipsos Super Score 92.5**

If the Tide ad levitated to #1 because of strategic acumen and humor, the NFL ad was #2 due likely to pure heart and humor. It also had the additional secret weapon which is leveraging a well-beloved song. Advertisers cannot underestimate the power of music to uplift, grab attention and make consumers feel more open to messaging. Add to this, well-loved familiar NFL players, self-effacing

behavior (guys dancing with each other) and an incredible leap that defies both gravity and perceived strength and we have a “touchdown” in the world of ads. Watching these guys dance was pure entertainment and the resulting scores indicated an audience emotional payoff.

#3 M&M’s– **“Human”–** **Ipsos Super Score 88.1**

Somehow it just seems entirely credible that if ever there was a person turned into an M&M (as people were turned into candelabras and candle sticks in Beauty and the Beast,) that the M&M associated person would naturally be Danny DeVito. The charm of this casting along with the empathy we feel for him now being freed from the desire to be devoured makes for great, almost fairy tale, story-telling. And yet, his fate is to be hit by a truck, although not apparently hurt (thank goodness.) The literal whammy of the last five seconds in this already arousing ad is what drives it to biometric Super Score greatness. No other SB ad achieved as high a peak in the last five seconds as “Human.”

#4 Ameritrade– **“All Night Long”–** **Ipsos Super Score 82.4**

Here is another ad that cleverly leverages insight into how the brain works. We want to complete things. We are conditioned to have closure on associations and right answers. When we forget a name, it drives us crazy until we can think of it and in this ad, we are stirred up wanting resolution because the neurons are firing—Lionel Ritchie = “All Night Long.” Advertising and marketing strategists have to appreciate the choice of song that nails the key message that at Ameritrade you can even trade “all night long” and is hugely popular, recognizable and evergreen. Yes, it is a celebrity and music ad, but paying for both doesn’t guarantee results. What made this ad work so well we believe is the seamless integration of the right message association and the brain teaser of incompleteness.

#5 Universal Movie Trailer— Skyscraper— Ipsos Super Score 79.6

One could argue that an ad for a Duane Johnson movie trailer excerpt for 45 seconds of bullets, flying, flames blazing and leaps off a tall building into free fall has an unfair advantage in a competitive Super Bowl ad comparison. But hey! That’s reality. And in the media world, everything competes with everything for share of attention and connection. This ad is a prime example of maximizing assets to tell an exciting story that holds excitement and builds to a climax. “Skyscraper” had a high average arousal, a high max peak and strong excitement at the end. Moreover, its mission is to sell excitement as the KPI for the film, so its positioning was on the line.

Additional Thoughts

Some of the ads we loved the most, didn’t make it to the top 20 on the **Ipsos Super Score Biometric Ranking**. A couple of things should be noted. **1.** The Super Score is a score about arousal. Did the ad get people emotionally stirred and therefore breakthrough on having an experiential impact? Given that this is the goal of most SB ads, being able to tell which ones thrilled and chilled is highly relevant. But we also know that there are many components to what drives effective advertising and some of these things like brand relevance and motivation were not measured. **2.** First viewing is when a commercial has the highest potential to excite an audience. But when the strategy used is to publicly preview the SB ads ahead of time to create buzz, other objectives are reached perhaps at the expense of measurable in-game context excitement. It all depends on the brand’s goals and media strategy.

Also regarding biometrics for this purpose, it is remarkable how a nonconscious response using GSR can be reliably applied to an audience in situation with a robust signal allowing for movement and natural behavior. Moreover, the results can be aggregated and reported in almost real-time. Hence this method was uniquely suited for the application and enabled us to objectively and reliably report on nonconscious response to the ads in the game on a relative basis.

Ipsos Super Bowl 2018— Top 20 Biometric “Super Score” Ad Ranking

	BRAND	AD DESCRIPTION	IPSOS SUPER SCORE	SUPER BOWL QUARTER
1	Tide	It’s Yet Another Tide Ad [Clydesdales & Mr. Clean]	92.8	3
2	NFL	Touchdown Celebrations to Come	92.5	3
3	M&M’s	Human	88.1	1
4	AmeriTrade	All Night Long	82.4	1
5	Universal	Skyscraper (Movie)	79.6	1
6	Groupon	Who Wouldn’t	75.5	4
7	Tide	It’s Yet Another Tide Ad Again [Tennis]	75.5	4
8	Tourism Australia	Dundee	71.6	2
9	Jeep	Jeep Jurassic	68.9	3
10	Scientology	Curious?	68.9	3
11	Paramount	Mission Impossible: Fallout (Movie)	66.6	2
12	Tide	It’s Another Tide Ad [Old Spice]	65.3	2
13	Universal	Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom (Movie)	62.6	1
14	Amazon	Alexa Loses Her Voice	61.5	4
15	Paramount	A Quiet Place (Movie)	60.8	1
16	Sprint	Evelyn	59.6	1
17	Doritos / Mountain Dew	Blaze Vs. Ice	58.9	1
18	SquareSpace	Make It Happen	55.8	2
19	Persil ProClean	Game Time Stain Time	55.2	2
20	Kia	Feel Something Again	54	3

About the Author



Elissa Moses leads the global Ipsos Neuro and Behavioral Science Center. The Center develops nonconscious measurement tools for understanding engagement and emotion of the brand experience for integration into client research. Ipsos offers several Neuro/Behavioral Science measures worldwide including EEG, Biometrics, Facial Coding, Implicit Reaction Time, and Eye Tracking.

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