
How Tide Cleaned Up At The Superbowl

One of the greatest parts of brand research is that there is always a little bit more to the story than the data first suggests.

An **Ipsos Connect** Point of View by Pedr Howard • February 2018



Image: Matt Carmichael

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Read any industry site on Monday morning and there was something of a consensus—well played, Tide. But go to the USA Today ‘AdMeter’ and Tide ads are conspicuously missing, ranking from 16–27. I’m yet to see a research-led ranking that puts a Tide ad in the top 5, but I’ve seen plenty of respected figures call them the winners.

What’s the disconnect? We think the issue is that most ad measurement systems for the Super Bowl ask people to rate each ad individually. So, these results tell us that, one-on-one, none of the Tide ads were the best. Ok, fine. But Tide didn’t make a bunch of individual ads. They created a marketing ecosystem that permeated the entire Super Bowl, causing the audience to second-guess other commercials.

At Ipsos Connect, we conducted a different type of Super Bowl ad measurement study. We tracked the biometric response of an audience as they watched the game, the commercials, half-time show, and everything in between. The collective results give us an insight into how the Tide campaign worked over the period of the entire game, rather than as individual ads.

Their first spot—‘This is a Tide ad’—actually didn’t see strong scores for emotional intensity. It’s in the bottom half of our rankings. Watching live, it seemed like Tide had perhaps over thought this and the ad was far too “meta” for a national audience. But then the second ad dropped, and the third, and the fourth, and something remarkable happened. These follow-ups, spoofing everything from beer to Pharmaceuticals, and even P&G brands like Old Spice, ended up being some of the highest responses we saw. The Clydesdale/Mr Clean commercial took our number 1 spot with just :15 of media. It was brilliantly done with snippets of some of the best-in-class creative we have seen in past years.

What happened is that the first ad ‘primed’ people to the campaign, allowing future ads to build on previous emotional associations. Asked in isolation about one of the ads, viewers gave positive feedback, but that doesn’t capture the depth of positive emotion built through four quarters of anticipation and pay-off. As one person at our study said “Tide kept us on our toes. I kept thinking of Tide as I watched other ads!”

And that’s how Tide won. They paid for the same 90s of media as Amazon. While ‘Alexa loses her voice’ was a great ad, and indeed topped the AdMeter, it was only great for 90s. Tide used a highly creative campaign to generate (and earn) a lot more media than they paid for—and our biometric response system identified that result.

Our system also identified many of the consensus top picks, with the NFL ‘Eli/Odell’ ad coming in second place and Sprint, Jeep, Tourism Australia and Doritos/Mountain Dew all making the top 20, but there is still a note of caution. Emotional intensity is an important metric, but it isn’t the only thing that matters in evaluating commercials. Bud Light may have just missed out on our top 20, but they did a great job building saliency in the lead-up with their ‘Dilly Dilly!’ line—this will live on long after the Super Bowl has faded from memory, thanks to initiatives such as buying the city of Philadelphia a beer. Also, an ad for The Church of Scientology managed to make #10 on our list, largely through causing a surge of negative emotion (our methodology measured emotional intensity, but not valence or direction). It received the most negative comments in our post-survey, so we aren’t ready to declare them winners just yet.

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Contact



Pedr Howard is Head of Early Stage at Ipsos Connect in the U.S., leading our team on all things to do with the early stage of brand communications. He is passionate about involving consumer research into communication development and finding new ways to involve key stakeholders into the research process.

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