

Driving the Path to Successful Super Bowl Auto Advertising

An Ipsos Creative Excellence Point of View
on automotive advertising in Super Bowl LIV

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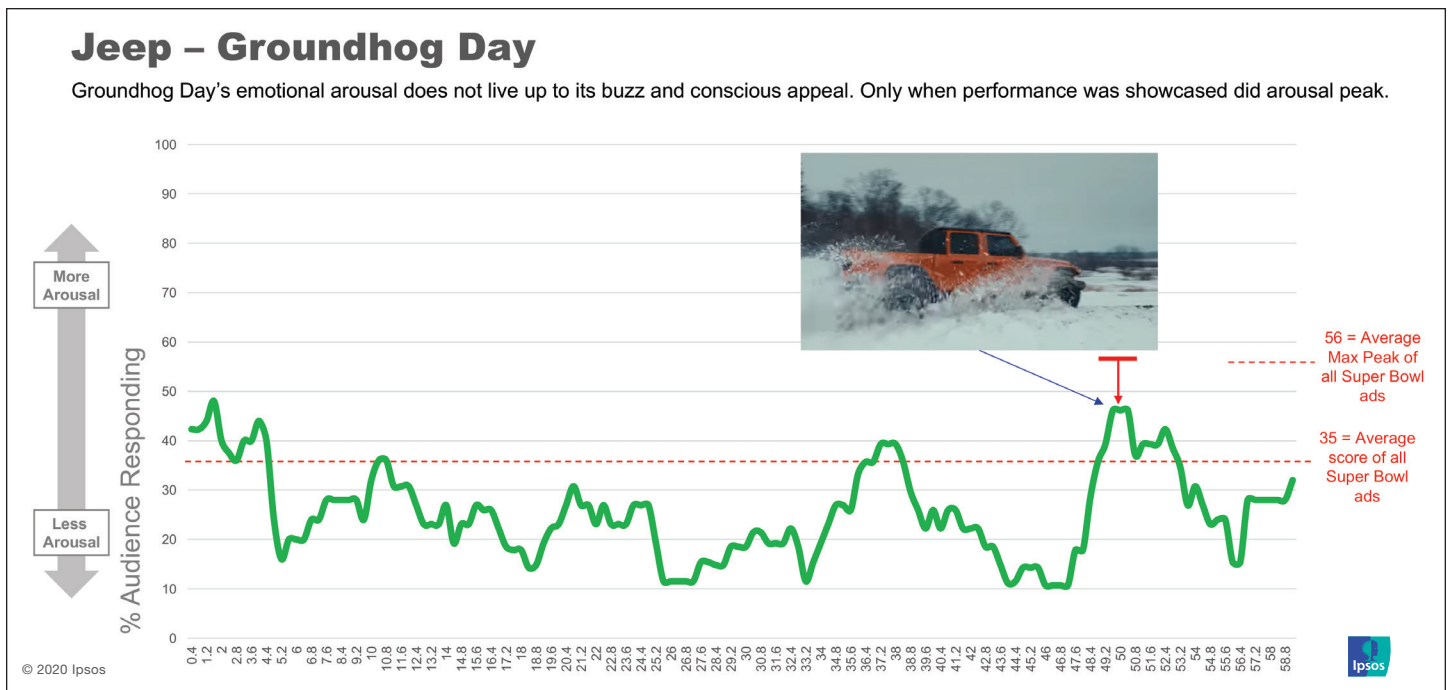
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Year after year, the automotive category represents one of the biggest spends in Super Bowl advertising. This year, car manufacturers spent roughly \$77 million in ad spend during the game in attempts to introduce and highlight new vehicles and technology. Traditional sources show that the category prevailed—with Jeep’s ‘Groundhog Day’ and Hyundai’s ‘Smaht Pahk’ dominating much of the post-game narrative and rankings such as USA Today. At Ipsos, we passively tracked the biometric response of an audience via galvanic skin response (GSR) as they watched the game, the commercials, half-time show, and everything in between. The collective results give us an insight into how advertising worked immediately and in real time on the viewer, revealing insights which tell a slightly different story.

Groundhog Day

Perhaps fittingly as we watched the annual catwalk of celebrity cameos, Jeep made a commercial about Groundhog Day, which received strong praise in traditional Super Bowl ad reviews, including the number one Ad Meter ranking. The ad undoubtedly has a fun, humorous executional play on an iconic movie, with the ironic twist of airing the ad on Groundhog Day. It’s not surprising that when viewers have the opportunity to reflect on the ad appeal, we see entertainment and virality as the outcome. However, looking at real time consumer arousal, a different story unfolds.



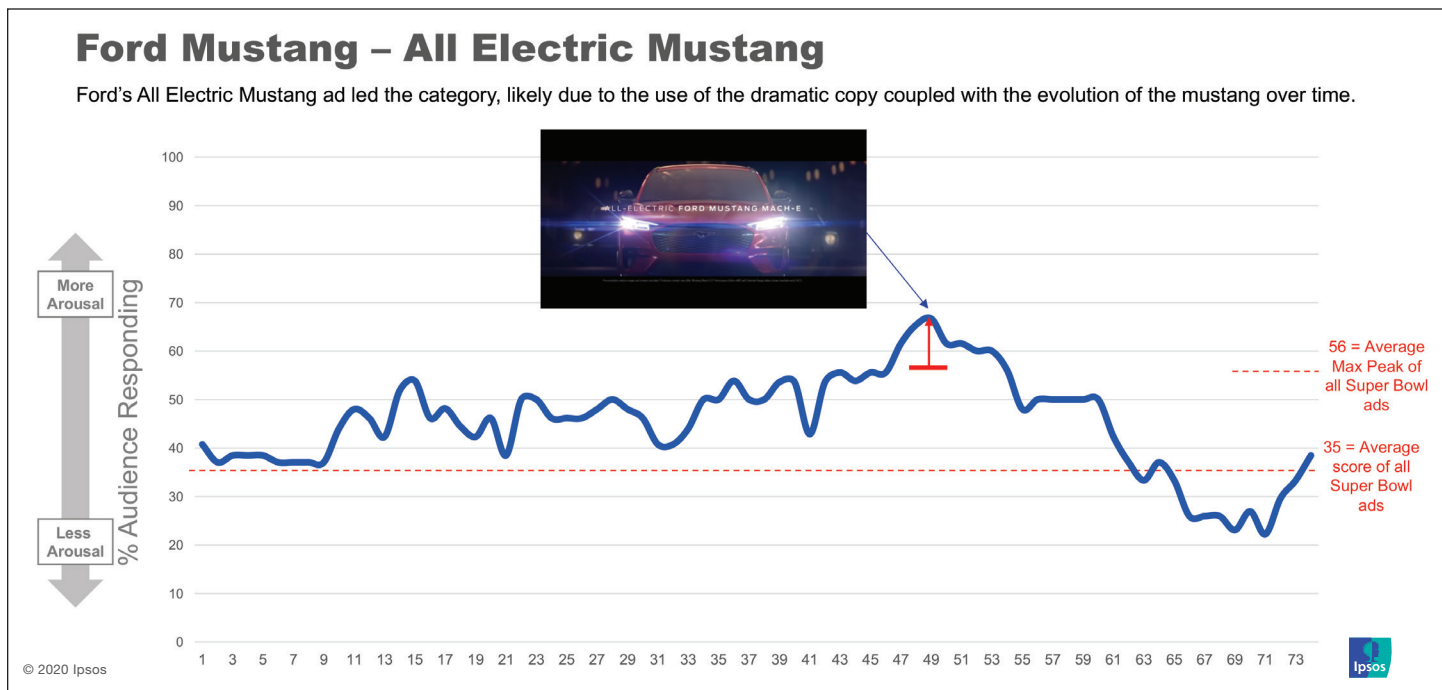
Our biometric data show very little arousal through the first half of the ad, where the more iconic movie cues are set up. Viewers only express above average emotional intensity through the ending performance scenes of the Gladiator on snow. While humorous, the execution takes some decoding to follow the twist on the movie, a throwback movie which may not

be top of mind for many consumers, limiting immediate, emotional response. It's an example of clever humor, and ultimately a somewhat considered response in comparison to many other auto commercials. The result is an ad that falls outside of our top 20 performers:

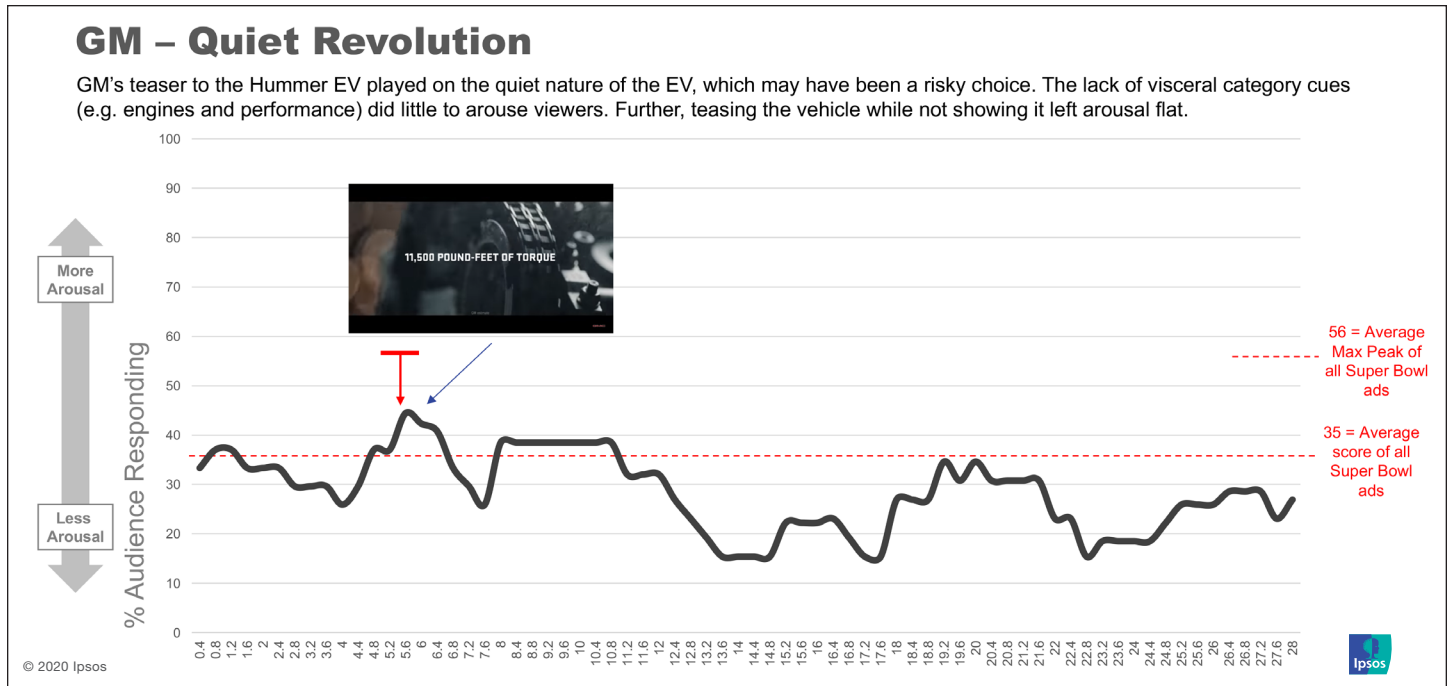
Ad	Top 20 Rank?	Max Engagement /%	Average Engagement /%
Ford—All Electric Mustang	6	66.67	44.7
Kia—Tough Never Quits	14	64.29	38.14
Audi—Let it Go	15	64	42.06
Genesis—Going Away Party	16	64	28.62
Hyundai—Smaht Pahk	—	60.71	39.65
Porsche—Car Heist	—	60.71	33.64
Toyota—Heros	—	59.26	31.93
Jeep—Groundhog Day	—	48	25.45
GM—Quiet Revolution	—	44.44	28.05

Electric Vehicles used to Spark Creativity

Our top and bottom performers both focused on an industry trend which was on full display this Super Bowl—Electric Vehicles. Ford, Audi, Porsche, and GMC chose to feature launches of their new EV. Notably the news of EV alone did not create consistency in arousal, suggesting the need for strong creative to support the feature and technology.



Ford succeeded, earning the top spot among auto ads, by utilizing a dramatic narrative while showcasing the high performing vintage mustangs to create tension and anticipation for the ending EV reveal.



Conversely, GM's Quiet Revolution insight and lack of traditional auto cues left arousal flat. The choice to focus on the silence may have been a risky creative move within the cluttered, loud Super Bowl environment. In fact, the peak engagement occurred during a loud interlude. Further, teasing the vehicle—but not clearly showcasing the exterior or interior—likely limited the immediate emotional engagement.

In Summary

Regardless of the creative style—humor, emotional storytelling, montage, etc.—viewers are emotionally engaged by the vehicles themselves across all auto ads, reinforcing the importance of the brand and product's role within the ad. Clearly showcasing the product—including the interior and exterior—while focusing on performance is still critical to automotive advertising.

It's worth remembering that emotional arousal is only one piece of the puzzle, especially for ads that will live on long past the big game. As with all creative, automotive Super Bowl ads need to have a good story, told well. Attention must be given to the brand, and the ad needs to generate either short term activation or build a longer-term relationship. Automotive also creates some nuances that can be different to other categories. Across all the automotive advertising research conducted at Ipsos, we find the top performing ads:

- **Clearly show the vehicle.** Attractive exterior visuals create interest. Supporting the exterior with interior visuals create strong information value and luxury perceptions.
- **Utilize brand assets.** Auto brands are a category which have some of the most noticeable brand assets. Leveraging the logo, a consistent campaign, the vehicle's grille, or the exterior itself can help create a well branded ad.
- **Showcase a relevant and compelling feature.** Elements of technology have become more recently relevant and interesting; however, focusing on obscure features that may be unique to the model but not widely relevant will suppress the brand impact.
- **Balance entertainment, emotion, and information.** Automotive is an exciting category! People like watching auto ads, but the story telling must balance a reason to buy the brand or model.

About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos live study conducted on February 2, 2020. The scores are based on passive emotional responses from an audience of 40 people recruited to watch the Super Bowl at a screening event in New York City. Each viewer was fitted with a Shimmer wrist bracelet and finger sensor to capture galvanic skin response (GSR), which reflects the extent to which their emotions are aroused at any moment.

While we know that emotional engagement by itself isn't an exact predictor of overall advertising success, it's a key factor for Super Bowl advertising and it's a strong indicator of long-term brand health and saliency.

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