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# A Comparative Analysis of Promos During the Super Bowl for Fox and NBC

Nathan R. Mitchell  
[nrmitchell85@gmail.com](mailto:nrmitchell85@gmail.com)

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PROMOS DURING THE SUPER BOWL  
FOR FOX AND NBC

by

Nathan R. Mitchell

B.A., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2008

A Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Science

Department of Mass Communications and Media Arts  
in the Graduate School  
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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science in Mass Communications and Media Arts

in the field of Professional Media & Media Management

Approved by:

Dr. Narayanan Iyer, Chair

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
July 2012

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

NATHAN R. MITCHELL, for the Master of Science degree in Professional Media and Media Management, presented on June 29, 2012, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PROMOS DURING THE SUPERBOWL FOR FOX AND NBC

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Narayanan Iyer

This study is a content analysis of the promotional methods used by the Fox Broadcasting Company (Fox) and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) during the Super Bowl. It takes a comparative look at the promotional spots, or promos, each network aired, during Super Bowl XLV (2011) and XLVI (2012), spanning an hour before kick-off, the game, and through the post game show. The promos have been categorized under various groups in order to analyze and compare the networks' strategy. The study documents trends and unique occurrences that occur when both networks are compared. The data is synthesized into percentages that reveal patterns in the promotional methods of each network, as well as, brings light to glaring differences in the branding identities of each network. Fox aired a total of 71 promos during its Super Bowl broadcast compared to NBC's 39 promotional spots aired. Fox promoted its programming and brand identity much more time efficiently than NBC, as well as constructed a wider palette of programming to introduce to the diverse Super Bowl audience.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Television has for most of its existence been an under appreciated art form and overlooked within the entertainment industry. It has been mocked as lesser art form to movies and literature. Groucho Marx said, "I find television very educational. Every time someone switches it on I go into another room and read a good book." (Walker, 1999). A Woody Allen character also once said of Beverly Hills being so clean, "because they don't throw their trash away, they make it into TV shows." (*Annie Hall*, 1977). These remarks, although humorous, demean the true nature of television. It is the everyman's medium. Television is free entertainment for the masses that gave a face to radio, and brought momentous social events into the households of every American. This is why television has dominated the American communication media for years.

However, the rise of newer technologies has made these statements moot. The wide acceptance of cable and the birth of many niche channels led to a fragmented audience, and also gave consumers more choice. This led to a model of less risky programming, and therefore inexpensive and dramatic programming like reality shows began to thrive. On the other hand, the opposite end of the spectrum has become popular as well, and programs with high production value have begun to increase in number. The growing popularity of television seasons on DVD has made it so executives can rationalize the high cost of production on these shows with the lucrative post-broadcast market's possibilities.

It is a time when new technologies have changed the way television is thought

about. More and more means of viewing TV programs are arising. The more methods there are available for watching television programs, the smaller the audience for broadcast gets. DVD, iTunes downloads, streaming web sites (both legal and not), and torrent downloading web sites have all played a part in shrinking broadcast's audience. This means that many of the viewers of shows are going unaccounted for by Nielsen ratings, which is often times the deciding factor in whether a show will be picked up or renewed for more seasons. Further more those who do watch television, actually on a television set, are often utilizing Digital Video Recorders (DVR) to watch programs at their convenience. Although Nielsen has come up with a means of measuring this audience, it is bad news for advertisers who are not reaching the audience of the show, because viewers are skipping past the commercials.

This trend has increased because audiences view commercial breaks as a nuisance. "Ads are seen as manipulative and as trying to get something out of us rather than to give something to us; they are seen as peddling stereotypes and appealing to base instincts . . . and thus are seen as more worthy of critique or scorn than of attention" (Gray, 2010, p. 55). This contempt toward commercials means that many advertisements are going unseen, which makes the ad time seem less valuable than a network may be saying. In an attempt to combat the trend of passing over commercials, marketers have looked more favorably toward integrating advertising into the program's content, "which can make the message immune to DVR skipping, and, in a best-case-scenario, confers the coolness-factor of the show and its stars onto the product itself" (Thielman, 2010, p. 11).

As is the case with all television networks, changes in technology have created a



need to adapt the way advertising is done. Mike Pilot, President of NBC Universal Sales and Marketing says, “We knew that commercials were increasingly susceptible to being skipped, and we were trying to find things we could do to keep people from skipping them. What we learned was that there was nothing we could do to keep the viewers from skipping commercials, but when we mingled our brands with advertiser brands and used our own talent, we had content that did really well” (Thielman, 2010, p. 11). This was said in regard to NBC’s Green is Universal weeks in which advertisers are attracted with opportunities to make their brands appear eco-friendly. “Lauren Zalaznick, NBC Universal President of Women and Lifestyle, notes the initial research demonstrated that Green Week grabs viewers’ attention because, among other things, it’s rooted in a social cause” (Thielman, 2010, p. 11).

These commercials effectively brand both NBC and whichever company is being advertised as environmentally conscious, or “green”, which is very important to people on both sides of the political spectrum. Brian Monahan, executive VP at the IPG Media Lab and a former media buyer with Universal McCann, said of the results of a study on viewership methods and technology, that “people are looking for more authenticity with their media; they’re consuming it ... with more intent; they want it to better represent who they are” (Lee, 2011, p. 3). Zalaznick says in an address to the American Express Consumer Services Group goes on to say, “our notion of brands has evolved from a straight-ahead idea of a logo and tagline laid over an age and gender demographic into a full lifestyle and behavioral sell” (Zalaznick, 2008, para 12).

This study will look into the promotional methods of the Fox Broadcasting Company (FOX) and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) during the 2011 and

2012 Super Bowls. It will collect data on the promotional spots, or promos, of each network during a time span of one hour before kick-off through the post game show. This data will then be analyzed and compared to illustrate similarities and differences between the two networks, as well as illuminate the brand identity each network was striving to create during their own presentation of the highly viewed Super Bowl.

This study adds a new perspective on how promotional ads are considered in the television industry and academically. To begin with, it is adding knowledge to the field of study around promotional spots, which is still fairly sparse. It also provides a more current look at Super Bowl promos, the last of which was Sue Westcott Alessandri's study of the 2001-2006 Super Bowls. Although most previous studies have looked at promos from structural and content aspects, they often skim over the methodology and focus on the effects on ratings of these conditions. This study is significant because it will consider only the methods of promotion, and compare how each network used them to brand the network as a whole. Finally, this study provides data on previously unmeasured statistics. For instance, it looks beyond the commercial break into the promotional capabilities of graphics and announcers during the broadcast itself. Another new variable being considered is the saturation of promos throughout the game, as in what part of the Super Bowl broadcast had the highest concentration of promos.

This study will consist of a literature review that discusses the Super Bowl, and what it means to American culture. It will discuss promotional spots, and how they can be utilized. The literature review will also include summaries of previous studies, and the research questions it intends to answer. Following the literature review will be a

description of the methodology used to collect the data on Super Bowls XLV and XLVI. These data sets will then be compiled and analyzed into descriptive statistics. Finally the results will be discussed in order to synthesize patterns and trends in the promotional methods of each network.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *The Super Bowl and Advertising*

There is one television event each year that allows advertisers and promoters not to worry as much about reaching their audiences they are trying to promote to, it is the Super Bowl. Since its origin in 1967, the Super Bowl has come to be one of the most important annual television events in the United States. It is celebrated at a level that rivals some of our national holidays (Mohr, 2007, p. 34). Over the years the Super Bowl has grown into more than simply the National Football League championship match. It has become Super Bowl Sunday, a day where people gather together at homes and restaurants across the United States to eat, drink, and fellowship. It is the highest rated television event in the United States, bringing in a record breaking 111.3 million viewers this year, up from 111 million in 2011 (Levin, 2012).

The Super Bowl offers a chance for advertisers and promoters to reach the largest audience television can offer. Not only does it reach a massive audience, but also the Super Bowl spans all demographics. Although some shows, like Fox's *American Idol*, reach near Super Bowl rating status, the audience for the Super Bowl is much more diverse. Men and women, young and old, tune in for the game on Super Bowl Sunday, and network executives can take the opportunity to showcase their entire line-up to the mass market. With such a massive and diverse audience, Fox and NBC were able to capitalize on the high ratings and promote some of their flagship and premiering programs. The Super Bowl is watched by all marketable demographics, and

therefore, the methods of promotion are primarily tailored to reach the broadest market possible.

It is not just the massive viewership that attracts so much attention from potential advertisers. The Super Bowl reaches such a huge audience, because it is more than a championship football game. It has become a television event with many viewers watching for the epic half-time shows, and more commonly the commercials. “Super Bowl advertising became an event as big as the game itself in 1984,” when a woman in red shorts and a tank top ran through an Orwellian crowd of gray clad, shaved headed drones, and threw a sledgehammer through a screen picturing a rhetoric spewing Big Brother in an ad for Apple Macintosh (Alessandri, 2009, p. 151). In a cover story on the “50 Greatest Commercials of All Time,” *TV Guide* (2007) wrote of this Apple ad that:

With a single airing during Super Bowl XVIII, ‘1984’ did more to change the way ads are created and viewed than any commercial in years. It was not the most heartwarming spot, nor a big laugh getter, but it turned a little-known brand into a household name and set a new commercial standard for production values and cinematic style.

We can see a correlation still today with commercials like Chrysler’s “Imported From Detroit” that aired in the 2011 Super Bowl. In 2012, Learmonth, Diaz, and Williams wrote that the Imported From Detroit ad was a “high-concept, big idea spot that put Detroit before the car and even before the celebrity (Eminem)” (para 25). Just to illustrate the power these ads have, the “1984” ad made Macintosh a household name and put them on the path to becoming the giant they are today. Likewise, about a year after the airing of the “Imported From Detroit” advertisement, President Obama “singled

out Chrysler as an example that America can compete once again in manufacturing.” (Learmonth et al, para 26).

Over the last few years, Super Bowl ads have been made available online so viewers can see the popular commercials they missed, or re-watch the ones they loved. This addition to the phenomena of Super Bowl advertisements has further engrained the feeling of an event into our culture by allowing people to watch the commercials without the distraction of a football game, and to share these advertisements with as many people as they can reach online. “YouTube views and blog posts allow an ad to succeed or fail outside traditional media structures. VW’s ‘The Force’ has been viewed more than 90 million times since Super Bowl 2011” (Learmonth et al, para 14).

According to Seth Winter, senior Vice President, NBC Sports Group Sales & Marketing, “the value of the Super Bowl is exponentially greater now with the employment of social media and social TV. [Advertisers] activate their sponsorships in the Super Bowl weeks out, sometimes weeks after. Now it’s not just buying a unit. Now it’s buying a unit and planning in and around the activation of the unit.” (Lafayette, 2011, p. 14).

The hugely successful ads of the Super Bowls are no longer just techniques to sell products. When a commercial airs on the Super Bowl it has the potential to become part of American culture. Pop culture comedies spoof them regularly. *Family Guy* has done the 1979 Mean Joe Greene Coca Cola commercial, *Futurama* spoofed 1984’s Apple ad, and *Scary Movie* did it’s take on the widely mimicked Budweiser “Wassup?” commercial. Often times the Super Bowl’s commercials are more memorable than the game itself. “According to research firm Eisner Communications, approximately 35% of people expect to talk about the Super Bowl ads at the water cooler on Monday” (Mohr,

2007, p. 35). This sort of marketing technique is known as buzz, or word of mouth, marketing. Super Bowl advertisers create ads with the idea in mind that people will want to talk about them with friends, and they “focus on ensuring that the right interpersonal conversations can get started” (Mohr, 2007, p. 36).

### *Promotional Spots*

On-air promotional advertisements for television programs, which will be referred to as promos throughout this essay, are a vital part of making television shows successful. They entice viewers to watch the program by giving them a general idea of what to expect. Promos are a major factor in the growth and success of television programs. They are to television shows what advertisements are to goods and services. According to Jonathon Gray (2010), Associate Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at University of Wisconsin Madison, advance promos are used to introduce viewers to the program and give them their first understandings of the characters, setting, and text as a whole, as well as provide a framework for viewers to see the show through (p. 54).

Promos have been used in various ways over the years. Early promos were often as simple as an announcer, such as a newscaster, telling the audience to stick around after the current program for the next. This method is still commonly used today. In the early 1990s networks, Fox being the first, began inserting their logo, or “bugs,” in the bottom right side of the screen during programming (Alessandri, 2009, p. 154). This is a method of promotion that falls into the first of two basic types, image. Image promos are concerned with the brand of the parent network. They typically use slogans that make them seem part of the community, such as “Your Good Neighbor”, or promote an entire block of programming, such as “Must See TV” (Eastman, 2000, p. 8).

The other type is program promotion, which may utilize radio spots, billboards, magazine ads, movie trailers, an online presence, and more along with on-air promos to draw attention to a single program on a network (Eastman, 2000, p. 8).

Most of the research on promos has been concerned with the effects of promos on the ratings of the programs they promote. Much of the research is on the content, such as genre promoted, and characteristics of the promos, such as the length and its placement in the commercial break. Many previous studies draw from research about advertising to find correlations on the topic of promotional spots. They have also found “that promotion appears to have a modest impact on viewing above and beyond” factors like a viewer’s previous experience with a program, or their preferred viewing habit. (Eastman, 2003, p. 240).

Promos are also used to remind viewers of current shows that are returning for a renewed season. They are the most successful way of getting non-avid fans to watch a program. This is because they are convenient for viewers. If a promo is attractive to viewers, all they have to do is continue to watch television. However, the large number of channels available, along with competition from other sources like purchasing DVDs, iTunes downloads, online streaming and torrent downloading, many shows’ broadcasts are going unseen, and uncounted by Nielsen ratings (Gray, 2010, p. 54). This is why promos are so vital to television programs. The Nielsen ratings are what keep the shows on-air, and so network executives are spending an increasing amount of time promoting their shows.

Promos not only work for individual shows, they also effectively brand a network. Since promoting a show can be risky because of the multiple forms of competition which



may cause a low Nielsen score, channels can brand themselves, “and if, over and above love for any given show, fans identify with specific channels, such brand loyalty is likely to translate more easily into the kind metrics that the television industry relies on” (Gray, 2010, p. 56). Gray (2010) goes on to say that the programs themselves end up becoming promos for the channel, using as an example that NBC’s “more personable and likeable characters,” such as Jim and Pam from the Office, are often shown fooling around or joking with the camera effectively brands NBC as “a place for fresh comedy with characters with whom we can identify” (p. 57). The same can be said about Fox’s use of its “Animation Domination” block, which includes *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*, *American Dad*, *The Cleveland Show*, and *Bob’s Burgers*, to brand itself as the network for edgy comedies.

Promos come at a price though. For every promo that is aired, the network is foregoing money from advertisers. In 2004, John Miller, president of NBC’s in-house promotion department, The Agency, estimated that if “The Agency were to buy its own promotional time, it would cost [them] between \$800 million and \$1 billion a year, which would make it among the largest advertisers in the United States” (Alessandri, 2009, p. 154). Even though this appears to be a massive loss of advertising dollars, it is a necessary cost for getting advertising dollars at all. Advertisers and networks come to an agreement based on the program the ad airs in having a certain rating share, or reaching a certain number of people.

Therefore, networks must promote themselves in order to reach an audience that will attract advertisers (Alessandri, 2009, p. 153). During the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia, which had unexpectedly low ratings, NBC executives actually had to replace

their scheduled promos with repeated commercials to “compensate advertisers for the shortfall in viewing” (Eastman & Billings, 2004, p. 340). The relationship between advertisers and networks is complicated, but can be mutually beneficial as long as promos are successful in bringing in an audience.

### *Research Questions*

Most of the research on the Super Bowl is concerned primarily with advertising than promotional spots. Also, most of the research on promotional spots mentions little about the Super Bowl. They tend to focus on prime time programming on the major networks. Those few studies that focus on promos during the Super Bowl do collect data about the extent of promotion in each game, but often put little to no emphasis on it. It is used as a means of framing the data opposed to a source for comparison between the networks.

1. What is the extent of promos that are featured during each Super Bowl?

The various strategies of promotion have been researched more thoroughly. Dr. Susan Tyler Eastman has contributed to several studies on the subject. She has studied promos structurally with consideration to how close a promo was scheduled to its program, the clutter of elements in the commercial break, and the frequency of repetition. She has also conducted studies concerning the content of promos, such as genre, number of programs promoted, and various appeals made to the audience in the promo spot. These studies do include various promotional strategies, but gloss over others as they are focused on the effects each variable has on ratings.

2. What are some distinctive promotional strategies that emerged from promos that were featured during each Super Bowl?

A study conducted by Sue Westcott Alessandri took a comparative look at the promos aired during six Super Bowls on three networks (two each for ABC, NBC, and Fox). However, this data was used as a means of comparing between the network's promotions and those of its local affiliates. The various methods were not compared across networks. This study will yield an important look at how various networks promote themselves, and illustrate how a network's methods compares against another.

3. How did the networks Fox and NBC differ in their promotional strategies?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This study will be using a content analysis to organize the data sets. A content analysis is a means of collecting data that “classifies textual material, reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data” (Weber, 1990, p. 5)

The data in this study will be collected by coding the promos of Super Bowl XLV (2011) and XLVI (2012) during a time span of an hour before kick-off through the post game show. This time span will be recorded via a DVR in order to simplify the coding process, and ensure no data was overlooked. This data will be compared to logs of the advertisements during each Super Bowl, obtained from Kantar Media, to ensure accuracy.

To collect data for this content analysis each promotional ad that aired during the given time span surrounding Super Bowl XLV and XLVI was logged in several different ways. The programs promoted were each coded by their name, genre, source channel, and whether they are new or existing shows. To illuminate any patterns that arise from the promotional process each promo was also logged by the time it aired, its duration, whether it is a single or combination promo.

In the case of combination promos, the word “combo” will be in the comments section of the codebook. There are three types of combination promos. The first is a block promo, which promotes a block or night of programming as one promo. In this sort of combination promo the focus is not separated for each show, instead the promos are intertwined into a block that encourages viewers to watch hours of programming,

opposed to sporadic shows. The second type of combination promo have been dubbed split promos, and involve multiple shows sharing one promo but, opposed to a block promo, the shows are segregated into their own segment of the promo. The third type of combination promo has been dubbed the “after” promo. These are promos that, similarly to split combination promos, utilize a more popular program to attract viewers in an attempt to have them continue watching after shows they are already watching end. Typically this sort of association involves the voiceover for whatever program informing viewers at the end of the promo that it is “on after (x),” and is typically used to promote shows of a similar genre or target market. An “a” in the comments section represents the word “after” (for example a coding of “aHouse” would mean that the show was promoted with the term “after House” used).

Using numerical codes, I will record how and where the program was promoted. The “How” section has been divided by whether an announcer promotes with text (0), announcer with visuals (1), announcer with no text or visuals (2), an animated scroll with visuals (3), a text scroll (4), a celebrity interview (5), or a traditional promotional commercial (6). The where is divided into in program promotion (0) or in commercial promotion (1). I will also look at each promo’s position within the commercial break. This will be determined by which spot amongst all of the advertisements of each ad break. Those promos that fall into the first or second spot will be considered the start of the commercial break (coded B), those in the last or penultimate position will be considered the end of the break (coded E), and the rest will be classified as the middle of the break (coded M).

This data will be analyzed data by constructing percentages and creating basic

descriptive statistics. Each network's statistics will be compared and utilized to figure out what are the dominant promotional strategies used during the broadcasts of the Super Bowl.

## CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS

To begin with the extent to which promos were utilized must be examined. The Fox Broadcasting Network had the rights to Super Bowl XLV (2011). In the given time, Fox aired 71 promotional ads for a total of 16 minutes and 24 seconds of airtime. These promos averaged about 14 seconds each. The following year NBC had the rights to air Super Bowl XLVI (2012). In the time span, NBC aired 39 promos for a total of 11 minutes and six seconds. The average time for the promos was about 17 seconds each. (See Table 1)

*Table 1*

Network	# of Promos	Total time of promos	Average time per promo
FOX	71	16 mins. 24 secs.	14 secs.
NBC	39	11mins. 6 secs.	17 secs.

The saturation of promos throughout the game was measured using the time the promo aired. The broadcast was divided by each quarter of the game with a pregame and postgame section added. Fox ran 43% of its promos in the before kick-off occurred. The post-game contained the second most with 18% of Fox's promos. NBC aired the largest portion of its promos during the Pregame Show as well with 30%. The Fourth Quarter was the second most saturated with 20.5% of NBC's promos. (See Table 2)

Table 2

	FOX		NBC	
	#	%	#	%
Pre-Game	31	43.7%	12	30.8%
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	6	8.5%	3	7.7%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	7	9.9%	5	12.8%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	5	7%	4	10.3%
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	9	12.7%	8	20.5%
Post-Game	13	18.3%	7	18%

Of the 71 promos aired by Fox, 63 occurred in the commercial break with eight promos actually integrated into the programming. 60 of these promos were traditional commercial promotions, five were said by an announcer accompanied by visuals such as images of the cast and textual graphics, two were said by the announcer but had no visual accompaniment, and four had no announcer voiceover but instead had a graphic animation with music accompaniment. Of the 39 promos aired by NBC the following year, 34 of them occurred within the commercial break, while five were integrated into the Super Bowl broadcast. The 34 promos that aired in the ad break were traditional commercial-style promos. Of the five that were in the program itself, an announcer accompanied by text did two, and an announcer without any visual accompaniment did the other three. (See Table 3)

Of the promos aired by Fox, 58 of them were for existing shows, and 13 of them were premiering the week of, or soon after, Super Bowl XLV. Of these 13 promos for



Table 3

Network	Where		How			
	During Break	During Broadcast	Traditional	Announcer w/ Visuals	Announcer w/out Visuals	Visuals w/out Announcer
FOX	63	8	60	5	2	4
NBC	34	5	34	2	3	0

new shows, five different programs were promoted. *Chicago Code* was promoted six times; *Traffic Light* had four, which leaves one promotional spot for *Terranova*, *Bob's Burgers*, and *Car Warriors*. Of the promos on NBC, six were for programs premiering the week of or soon after the Super Bowl, while the other 33 were previously existing programs. Of these six promos, four were for *Smash*, and *Awake* and the recently rebranded NBC Sports Network each had one promo. (See Table 4)

Table 4

Network	New Shows	Existing Shows
FOX	13	58
NBC	6	33

Although Fox focused the majority of its promo spots on its own network's shows with 68 promos, it also took advantage to point the wide Super Bowl audience toward its affiliates with FOX News, FX, and Speed each having one show promoted. The majority of NBC's promos were for shows aired on NBC itself, a total of 36. Affiliated channels USA and The History Channel each had one show promoted, and NBC Sports Network also received one promo.

Both Fox and NBC utilized three different kinds of combination promos mentioned above in their broadcasts of the Super Bowl. Fox aired two block promos.

The first was for the “Animation Domination” block of programming on Sunday nights that includes *The Simpsons*, *American Dad*, *Bob’s Burgers*, *Family Guy*, and *The Cleveland Show*. The second block promo was for the entire Fox channel. NBC aired one block promotion for NBC Thursdays that featured the block as a sort of event and included the shows titles (*30 Rock*, *Parks and Recreation*, *The Office*, and *Up All Night*) in text for three seconds of the 20-second promo. Fox aired four split combination promos. All four of these split promos included a premiering show partnered with an already established program. NBC used two split combination promos. Both were for *The Voice* and the *Jimmy Fallon Super Bowl Special* which each followed the Super Bowl. Fox used two programs for its 11 “after” associations. *Glee* was used seven times and *House* was used four. NBC used six “after” promos. Five of them were “after the Game,” and all for *The Voice*. The sixth was for local news and was an “after *The Voice*” promo. (See Table 5)

When considering the different promos position within commercial breaks, it is important that the previously mentioned combination promos are essentially one element in the ad break. This takes into account the promos that were integrated into the programming as well, and condenses the combination promos into one element. Hence, for this section, the total number of promos by Fox drops from 71 to 45. With 166 advertising spots in Super Bowl XLV, Fox’s promos accounted 27.1% of the commercial time. Likewise, with one combination and five promos not in the ad break, NBC’s promos drop to 33 promos. Super Bowl XLVI contained a total of 146 spots in the commercial breaks. So, NBC’s promos accounted for 22.6% of the commercial time. (See Table 6)

Table 5

Network	Block Promo	Split promo	“After-“ promo
FOX	2	4	11
NBC	1	2	6

Table 6

Network	# of Promo Elements in Break (x)	Total # of Elements in Break (y)	x/y
FOX	45	166	27.1%
NBC	33	146	22.6%

The number of elements in Fox’s commercial breaks that included promos ranged from three to eight with nearly half of them having five or six elements. Over half of these promos appeared in the fourth and fifth position of the commercial break. The number of elements in NBC’s commercial breaks that included promos ranged from one to six, with 42% of them having six elements. The position of these promos in the ad breaks also ranged from one to six, but it was much more varying statistics. Sixth, fourth, and first were the most promoted in positions with 24%, 21%, and 18%, respectively; third, fifth, and second followed with 15%, 12%, and 9%. Over all, the spread only decreased by one promo in each position. (See Table 7)

The position within the ad break does not show the entire picture though. A better way of looking at the data is by combining the position and number of elements in a specific promo’s break to see whether it was at the beginning (first or second position),

Table 7

Network	Frequency															
	# of Elements in Ad Break								Position in Ad break							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
FOX	0	7	8	12	24	4	2	2	4	7	8	12	24	4	2	2
NBC	1	1	4	9	4	15	0	0	6	3	5	7	4	9	0	0

end (final or penultimate position), or middle (past the second and before the penultimate position) of the commercial break. During NBC's broadcast, the end of the break held 73% of the locations of the promos. The beginning of the break had 24% of the promos, and only one program was promoted during the middle of an ad break. For Fox's broadcast, 67% of the promos were aired at the end of the commercial break, with the beginning and middle of the break retaining 20% and 13%, respectively. (See Table 8)

The genres of program that Fox chose to promote had quite a wide range. In all there were seven different genres promoted during Super Bowl XLV. Each show fell into news, comedy (which includes sitcoms, animation, and standard comedies), drama

Table 8

Network	Frequency of Promo Position Within Own Ad Break		
	Beginning	Middle	End
FOX	11	8	44
NBC	8	1	25

(including crime, medical, and sci-fi), reality, sports, talent, and comedy-drama (for shows that blur the line between drama and comedy). The most common genre promoted was comedy. Shows like *Family Guy*, *Raising Hope*, and *Traffic Light* brought the comedy genre to the top of the list with 25.4% of the total shows promoted. Following closely after were dramas like *House* and *Chicago Code*, with 24%, and the network's popular comedy-drama *Glee*, with 22.5%. The sports, talent, and news genres came in with nearly 10% of the promos, and the reality show on Speed called *Car Warriors* came in with 1.4% of promotions with its single ad.

As for the genres that NBC decided to promote during Super Bowl XLVI, there were seven different categories. They were drama, news, talent, sports, comedy, reality, and comedy-drama. The most promoted genre was talent programs such as *The Voice* and *America's Got Talent* with 30% of the promos. News programming followed closely with the local news and *Rock Center with Brian Williams* garnering 28% of the promos. The share of promos then fell off with dramas only getting 15%, comedies at 10%, sports at nearly 8%, reality shows at 5%, and the comedy-drama *Psych* being promoted once with 2.5%. As far as the shows are considered individually, *The Voice* retained 28.2% of the promotions. The local news was promoted the second most often with 23% of total promotions. The premiering show *Smash* held 10% of the promos. *The Rock Center with Brian Williams* and *Jimmy Fallon's Super Bowl Special* each received 5% of the promotions. The other eleven programs each had only one promo aired, or 2.5% of the promos each.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The results listed in Chapter 4 represent a collection of variables that outline the promotional tactics of Fox and NBC as they promote to the largest, most diverse audience in the United States. These figures come from the length of time networks gave to promotion, where and how these promotions were delivered. By examining these data sets conclusions can be drawn about the motives of the networks as well as norms in the industry.

To begin with, the amount of time Fox spent promoting was much more when compared to NBC. They were able to promote nearly twice as many programs in the same amount of time as NBC. The average time of each promo was only three seconds less on Fox, which does not account for the great difference in the total number. This leads to the conclusion that Fox was much more time-effective with its use of promotion than NBC. This does not prove that the ads were less effective on NBC, but only that the viewers of Fox had much more repetition of promos than those of NBC.

When considering the time each promo aired, the most logical way to segment the data was by the sections each Super Bowl is already split into. This data does show that the most promos are aired during the pregame section, but that part is also the longest section of the game. The postgame sections are dense with promos compared to the rest of the sections, especially with this section being the shortest. This is because it is a network's last chance to carry viewers over from the game to the

program afterward that has been promoted all game. Also, the explanation for the high number of promos in the pregame goes beyond the length of time it contains. The pregame to the Super Bowl is a time for anticipation. People have started to gather around the TV in preparation for the game. However, there is very little going on as far as the game is concerned. This allows networks to take advantage of the waiting audience with plenty of promotions, because there will be no negative association with cutting away from the game. Also, before the game starts is not one of the most sought after spots by advertisers. As the game progresses, the audience grows, so many advertisers prefer to wait until later in the game, when a larger audience has tuned in. This allows the networks to use sub-prime ad time to promote their own programming.

When looking at the how and the where promos were utilized, the expected results arose. The large majority of promos for both networks were in the commercial breaks. Just as the Super Bowl is an event where advertisers showcase commercials with incredibly high production value, network promotions have to follow suit. In order to get noticed against a backdrop of ads that are designed to create massive buzz the networks must go the extra mile during the commercial breaks. Also, since a large portion of the Super Bowl audience will be paying more attention to the commercials than the game itself, networks can take advantage and have their promos seen by some of the least distracted audience it may ever have.

Both networks did take advantage of in broadcast promotion to accompany the traditional in break commercial spots. In broadcast promotion is one of several means of continuing to promote the brand, while leaving commercial time available for advertisers. The most common ways involve an announcer who is sometimes

accompanied by a graphic of some sort. Fox used more promotional graphics during its broadcast than NBC did. This may be attributed to the younger demographic, and therefore more comfortable with flashy editing, that Fox is branded towards. However, the data is hardly large enough to confirm this suggestion.

Another means of freeing up commercial break time for advertisers was utilized through the different types of combination promos each network utilized. Across the board Fox utilized nearly double the number of combination promos than NBC, with the “after-“ promos being the only type where NBC snuck above 50%. These “after-“ promos can be utilized very effectively. They act as a reminder for viewers, and almost always associate a premiering or fledgling show with a more established one. They are a means of informing viewers that they can continue to get quality entertainment from a network after watching a show they are familiar with. These are so valuable, because they take up only a few seconds of time. Split promos were used similarly to the “after-“ promos and promote a show in correlation with another more successful program. These are an effective way of enticing viewers to watch both programs. Unlike “after-“ promos they give more attention to the established show. Split promos are most effectively used at the beginning of a new season or to a promote significant episode of the existing show.

The final type of combination promo each network used were block promos. Both NBC and Fox used a block to promote a certain night of similar programming on the networks. Fox promoted its “Animation Domination” block on Sunday nights, and NBC promoted its “NBC Thursdays.” Both of these blocks are comprised of several shows with similar styles, and remind fans of that particular style that there are multiple



hours of programming that will interest them. The other type of promo Fox used was the most direct form of branding that occurred during the Super Bowl. It was an promo that contained popular characters from Fox's most popular shows passing a football to each other through the space off screen. It created a fun atmosphere, and an illusion that all of these characters are part of the Fox family, and they are a quirky, fun-loving bunch. NBC missed a massive opportunity by not running a promo that linked its multiple facets into one cohesive brand that viewers can trust to entertain them, not matter the program.

Another strategy utilized by promoters pertains to where in the commercial break a promo is aired. When looking over the results of the data, it is obvious that the networks decided to end load the breaks with the promotion spots. There are three reasons for this pattern. The first is to avoid the notorious tendency of people to leave the television at the beginning of the commercial break. Even though the Super Bowl is an advertising event, the cut to commercial is still a signal for viewers to head to the kitchen or the bathroom. The second pertains to staying power. The last commercial in the ad break will be the one about which a viewer spends the most time thinking. This amount of time varies depending on the events of the programming that the break was in, but on average the final spot stays the freshest in a viewer's memory. The third reason for this pattern is a repetition strategy. When a network promotes a show, and then goes back into a program a viewer is already enjoying it doubles the promos message of the network being a place for said viewer to find the entertainment for which he/she is looking. It is a matter of reinforcing the network's brand via graphics and

spinning logos that transition in and out of commercial breaks during sports programming.

When looking at the ratio of premiering programs that were promoted against the number of existing, the numbers look drastically in favor of existing shows. The first reason for this is simple, and it is that there are more existing programs than new ones. Although this is true, the ulterior reasoning behind the low number of new shows being promoted is because new shows are risky. With the high amount of competition in the entertainment industry, it can be hard for new shows to bring in an audience, so many get canceled in the first season. This is why NBC promoted *Smash* far more than its other new programming. *Smash* is set to be NBC's new flagship show, and combines a narrative aspect to their most popular genre, musical talent. The only reasoning for the lack of promotion for the premiering drama *Awake*, which has since been canceled, is that it's original story line clashed with the image that NBC was constructing with its Super Bowl broadcast. FOX's new programming had a more even spread. Their method minimized risk, by promoting programs that would reach larger audiences. *Chicago Code* and *Traffic Light* were down the middle of the Fox's target market for drama and comedy. The other premiering shows, *Terranova*, *Bob's Burgers*, and *Car Warriors*, have fairly niche audiences. Had these promos been during a football game that was not the Super Bowl, more ads for each of these shows would've been expected. Since the Super Bowl reaches such wide demographics though, it was not worth sacrificing the repetition of a more "middle of the road" program to promote one with a narrow audience.

The final aspect of the study deals with the different genre's each network chose

to promote. The choices made in this section define the brand image that the network was trying to build. They are less direct than a block promo, but instead subtly craft the network's identity by adding layer upon layer of programming each with its own flavor of genre. Both network's promoted the show airing right after the network more than any other program. So, on top of the layers of genres that are slowly building the image, this flagship show is acting as the main stimulus for the brand image. *Glee* aired after Fox and held nearly 23% of all of Fox's promos. This means that *Glee* was promoted sixteen times. The next closest program was *House* and *Chicago Code* each getting six promos or 8.45%. *Glee* falls on the dividing line between two genres, and creates its own with comedy-drama. The genres of comedy and drama were promoted the most on Fox getting 25.4% and 24% respectively. The concentration of promos for comedy and drama, coupled with the dominance of a program that spans these genres, solidifies Fox's desired brand identity for its 2011 Super Bowl broadcast as a place for edgy comedy and enticing drama with a focus on a young audience who are more accepting to the shows' contemporary themes.

The genres promoted during NBC's broadcast of the Super Bowl are in stark contrast to those of Fox. While Fox opted to promote narratives, NBC opted for a programming more rooted in reality. The two genres NBC promoted above all else were talent and news. These are very traditional types of programming, and therefore mark NBC as a channel for older viewers. Even though NBC has shows that do extremely well with young audiences the brand identity their Super Bowl promos constructed is one of simple wholesome entertainment, as well as a place to find tried standards in programming like the news and talent competitions. One of the reasons for NBC not

promoting its more popular shows may have been because they already have a strong fan base, and therefore do not require as much promotion. The network's online streaming web site, Hulu.com, may also play a factor in the choice of programming to promote. A few ads for Hulu aired during NBC's Super Bowl, and the network may have utilized them as a means of promoting its series. Talent shows have a much lower online viewer response than series do. This is because they are often based around a competition, and once the results of the level of a competition are known, the need to watch the program significantly dwindles. NBC may have utilized these Hulu ads as a means of promoting shows that would be better watched during broadcast.

#### *Limitations of this Study*

The primary limitation of this study is its small data set. Other studies have spent multiple years researching Super Bowl promos, while this one encompasses only two. The larger data set would not only create more accurate statistics, but it would also show a more complete view of the strategies utilized by each of the four large networks, ABC, NBC, Fox, and CBS. This study also has no inter-coder reliability, which adds speculation to the accuracy of the statistics. Preferably different researchers would code the same data set in order to verify that the data is correct, but this was not accomplished in this study.

#### *Future Research Directions*

This data set gives a glimpse into the mind of the marketers for Fox and NBC. It could also be utilized in many other ways. With the ad time for a thirty second spot during the Super Bowl running from \$3 million (2011) to \$3.5 million (2012), an interesting comparison could be done about whether the promotional spots were cost

effective. By analyzing the ratings of the shows immediately following the Super Bowl, and comparing the existing ones to previous weeks, a correlation could be made to show whether or not the ads were worth forgoing the millions in advertising dollars. Unfortunately, in the case of a program that appears cost efficient, it would be difficult to synthesize whether the Super Bowl promo was the definite catalyst behind the increase in ratings or not.

It would also be interesting to compare the business dealings of the networks previous to the Super Bowl with what programs were promoted. These dealings would be those of the networks themselves, but also the media conglomerates of which they are part. Fox is under News Corp, which has many holdings in the media industry, and NBC is under NBC Universal which is controlled by Comcast and General Electric. This could reveal some driving factors not only behind the entertainment that was promoted, such as Universal films during Super Bowl XLVI, but also possibly areas of cross-promotion perhaps with GE appliances. These business dealings also may explain trends in this data set, such as whether shows like *30 Rock* that are popular on NBC-owned Hulu.com were not promoted in lieu of shows that are traditionally watched in broadcast such as the local news or reality shows.

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## APPENDICES



# APPENDIX A

## FOX: Super Bowl XLV (2011) Codebook

#	comments	Time	Program name	Where	How	Duration	# of elements in ad break	Position in adbreak	Placement	New/existing show	Program genre	Program promo source channel
	START	04:00:00 PM										
1		04:01:00 PM	The O' Reilly Factor	0	3	1	n/a	n/a		existing	news	Fox News
2		04:01:00 PM	Daytona 500	1	6	10	6	1	B	existing	sports	Fox
3		04:03:00 PM	King of Queens	1	1	9	6	5	E	existing	sitcom	Fox
4	combo	04:17:00 PM	Traffic Light	1	6	30 (16)	8	3	M	new	sitcom	Fox
5	combo	04:17:00 PM	Raising Hope	1	6	30 (11)	8	3	M	existing	comedy	Fox
6	combo	04:17:00 PM	Glee	1	6	30 (3)	8	3	M	existing	comedy-drama	Fox
7		04:18:00 PM	American Idol	1	6	20	8	4	M	existing	talent	Fox
8		04:18:00 PM	Family Guy	1	6	30	8	5	M	existing	animated	Fox
9		04:19:00 PM	local FOX news	1	6	5	8	8	E	existing	News	Fox
10		04:31:00 PM	Glee	1	6	30	7	4	M	existing	comedy-drama	Fox
11		04:43:00 PM	Bones	1	6	20	5	5	E	existing	crime drama	Fox
12		04:59:00 PM	Daytona 500	1	6	10	7	1	B	existing	sports	Fox
13	aGlee	05:00:00 PM	local FOX news	1	6	10	7	2	B	existing	News	Fox
14		05:06:00 PM	American Idol	1	6	30	5	4	E	existing	talent	fox
15	combo	05:07:00 PM	American Dad	1	6	25	5	5	E	existing	animated	fox
16	combo	05:07:00 PM	Bob's Burgers	1	6	25	5	5	E	new	animated	Fox
17	combo	05:07:00 PM	Family Guy	1	6	25	5	5	E	existing	animated	fox
18	combo	05:07:00 PM	Cleveland Show	1	6	25	5	5	E	existing	animated	Fox
19	combo	05:16:00 PM	Chicago Code	1	6	45 (8)	6	5	E	new	crime drama	fox
20	combo	05:16:00 PM	House	1	6	45 (15)	6	5	E	existing	medical drama	fox
21	combo	05:16:00 PM	Chicago Code	1	6	45 (22)	6	5	E	new	crime drama	fox
22		05:19:00 PM	Glee	0	2	1	n/a	n/a		existing	comedy-drama	fox
23	combo	05:27:00 PM	Bones	1	6	30	6	5	E	existing	comedy-drama	fox
24	combo	05:27:00 PM	Glee	1	6	30	6	5	E	existing	comedy-drama	fox
25	combo	05:27:00 PM	Raising Hope	1	6	30	6	5	E	existing	comedy	fox
26	combo	05:27:00 PM	House	1	6	30	6	5	E	existing	medical drama	fox
27	combo	05:27:00 PM	Fringe	1	6	30	6	5	E	existing	Sci-fi	fox
28	combo	05:27:00 PM	American Idol	1	6	30	6	5	E	existing	talent	fox
29	combo	05:27:00 PM	American Dad	1	6	30	6	5	E	existing	animated	fox
30	combo	05:27:00 PM	Glee	1	6	30	6	5	E	existing	comedy-drama	fox
31		05:27:00 PM	Bones	1	6	30	6	6	E	existing	comedy-drama	fox
	-KICKOFF-											
32	aHouse	05:57:00 PM	Chicago Code	1	6	15	4	4	E	new	crime drama	fox
33		06:03:00 PM	Fringe	1	6	10	5	4	E	existing	Sci-fi	fox
34		06:03:00 PM	NFL Draft	1	3	10	5	5	E	existing	sports	Fox
35	aGlee combo	06:06:00 PM	Raising Hope	1	6	15 (12)	3	3	E	existing	comedy	Fox
36	aGlee combo	06:06:00 PM	Traffic Light	1	6	15 (3)	3	3	E	new	comedy	Fox
37		06:17:00 PM	House	1	6	20	5	4	E	existing	medical drama	fox
	--2ND QUARTER--											
38		06:51:00 PM	Glee	1	6	10	5	5	E	existing	comedy-drama	fox
39		07:00:00 PM	American Idol	1	6	30	5	1	B	existing	talent	fox
40	aGlee	07:03:00 PM	local FOX news	1	6	5	5	5	E	existing	News	fox
41		07:27:00 PM	House	1	6	15	4	2	B	existing	medical drama	fox
42		07:28:00 PM	Car Warriors	1	6	30	4	3	E	new	reality	speed
43		07:28:00 PM	Daytona 500	1	6	30	4	4	E	existing	sports	fox
44		07:29:00 PM	Glee	0	1	17	n/a	n/a		existing	comedy-drama	fox
	--3RD QUARTER--											
45	aHouse	07:38:00 PM	Chicago Code	1	6	20	5	4	E	new	crime drama	fox
46		07:38:00 PM	American Idol	1	6	15	5	5	E	existing	talent	fox
47		07:55:00 PM	X Factor	1	6	30	3	3	E	existing	talent	Fox
48		08:05:00 PM	Glee	0	1	19	n/a	n/a		existing	comedy-drama	fox
49	aGlee	08:24:00 PM	local FOX news	1	6	5	6	6	E	existing	News	fox
	--4TH QUARTER--											
50		08:33:00 PM	Glee	1	6	20	4	4	E	existing	comedy	fox
51	aGlee	08:45:00 PM	Raising Hope	1	6	15	4	4	E	existing	comedy	Fox
52	aHouse	08:47:00 PM	Chicago Code	1	6	10	4	2	B	new	crime drama	fox
53		08:48:00 PM	House	1	6	30	4	3	E	existing	medical drama	Fox
54		08:48:00 PM	NFL Draft	1	3	10	4	4	E	existing	sports	fox
55		08:59:00 PM	Glee	1	6	30	6	1	B	existing	comedy	fox
56		09:01:00 PM	Terranova	1	6	30	6	4	M	new	Sci-fi	fox
57		09:01:00 PM	Traffic Light	1	6	10	6	5	E	new	comedy	fox
58		09:01:00 PM	Glee	1	6	10	6	6	E	existing	comedy-drama	fox
	-POST GAME-											
59		09:09:00 PM	Justified	1	6	30	8	2	B	existing	drama	FX
60		09:11:00 PM	House	1	6	20	8	5	M	existing	medical drama	fox
61		09:12:00 PM	local FOX news	1	6	10	8	8	E	existing	News	fox
62	aHouse	09:24:00 PM	Chicago Code	1	6	30	6	6	E	new	crime drama	fox
63		09:25:00 PM	Glee	0	1	17	n/a	n/a		existing	comedy-drama	Fox
64		09:31:00 PM	Glee	1	6	30	7	7	E	existing	comedy-drama	fox
65		09:33:00 PM	Glee	0	3	13	n/a	n/a		existing	comedy-drama	Fox
66	aGlee combo	09:34:00 PM	Raising Hope	1	6	30 (10)	7	2	B	existing	comedy	Fox
67	aGlee combo	09:34:00 PM	Traffic Light	1	6	30 (10)	7	2	B	existing	comedy	Fox
68	combo	09:34:00 PM	Glee	1	6	30 (3)	7	2	B	existing	comedy-drama	Fox
69	aGlee	09:36:00 PM	local FOX news	1	6	10	7	7	E	existing	News	Fox
70		09:37:00 PM	Daytona 500	0	1	23	n/a	n/a		existing	sports	Fox
71		09:38:00 PM	Glee	0	2	4	n/a	n/a		existing	comedy-drama	Fox
	END	09:38:00 PM										
	comment			0 - in the program; 1 - adbreak		0 - announcer says with text; 1 - announcer says with visuals; 2 - announcer with no visuals or text; 3 - animated scroll with visuals; 4 - text scroll; 5 - celeb interview; 6 - promo commercial	# of seconds			B- Beginning; M- Middle; E- End		



VITA

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University

Nathan R. Mitchell

nrmitchell85@gmail.com

Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
Bachelor of Arts, Cinema and Photography, May 2008

Research Paper Title:

A Comparative Analysis of Promos During the Super Bowl for Fox and NBC

Major Professor: Dr. Narayanan Iyer