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Super Bowl LI Advertisers Strategic Playbook: Brand Promotion Working Overtime

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The magnitude of the Super Bowl has prompted advertisers to produce content as grand as the sporting event itself (Veksner, 2015, p. 130). The 2017 game was particularly unique with the historic face-off between the Atlanta Falcons and New England Patriots (Bergman, 2017; Breech; 2017). This paper examined brand promotion during Super Bowl LI by analyzing appeals, creative strategies, and tactics in television commercials and social media as well as consumer affect from USA Today's Ad Meter rankings. Results indicate that advertisers made great efforts to feature appeals and strategic messaging during the game to fit each promotional platform.

Keywords: Super Bowl, Advertising, Appeals, Social Media

Playbooks for football athletes are an essential tool for winning games. These plays help players execute a specific strategy for both the offensive and defensive sides of the ball. Advertisers hold a similar playbook with their own advertising plays, also known as tactics, which are implemented to meet advertising objectives based on an overall campaign strategy. According to Barry (2016), developing a distinctive sound strategy is the first step in the creation of an overall campaign, followed by the idea and execution. Taylor (1999) further explains that strategy refers to what is going to be said, while execution relies on tactics, including certain media, to engage with consumers.

One element that is often at the center of a strategy is the appeal that an advertiser uses to target a specific market. Per Dix and Marchegiani (2013), appeals are "the sticky glue that hooks the reader or viewer to the advertising message" (p. 393). The use of strategies and appeals in advertising has been investigated from a variety of angles including Golan's (2008) examination of these two variables within

viral advertising. He found that a transformational strategic approach was primarily used in viral ads along with more humorous and sexual appeals. Scholars have also researched the application of advertising strategies, appeals, and tactics during live events including the Super Bowl (e.g., Kim, McMilian, & Hwang, 2005) and through the use of social media (e.g., Westberg, Stavros, Smith, Munro, & Argus, 2016).

The current study combines the two by reviewing the advertising strategies, appeals, and tactics implemented by brands through social media and television commercials during Super Bowl LI in 2017. The game between the Atlanta Falcons and New England Patriots made history as the first Super Bowl to go into overtime. The live event captured viewers due to its intensity and gave brands an opportunity to engage on a level like never before.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Advertising Appeals

The purpose and definition of an advertising appeal is to incorporate attention-getting element(s) in ads, regardless of medium, so as to persuade consumers to invest their time and money into the product or service advertised (Kroon, 2014; Russell & Lane, 2002). Depending on the appeal used, they are not always primarily focused on the function or features of products, but instead are often creatively implemented in a more evocative manner so that consumers are compelled to integrate the product, brand, or service into their lives (Akbari, 2015). Clow and Baack (2004) write that advertisers often create ads with one of seven types of appeals in mind, those being fear, humor, sex, music, rationality, emotions, and scarcity. However, advertising appeals are typically broadly categorized as either rational or emotional (Belch & Belch, 2004; Brennan & Binney, 2010). Rational appeals are heavily based on providing information to the consumer to enhance the decision-making process, while emotional appeals focus more on the creative side of advertising and are utilized primarily for attention getting purposes (Clow & Baack, 2004). Which appeal is better overall has been up for debate, with many suggesting that a hybrid approach is a brand's best strategy (Barakat, 2014; Pringle & Field, 2009; Thompson, 2011).

Advertising appeals literature is rife with scholars exploring appeals from a variety of angles (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2009; Lin, Lee, & Lin, 2014). Lin and colleagues (2014) utilized specific advertising elements (copy, pictures, and products) to create both rational and emotional appeal ads for their experiment. The authors found that the experimental manipulation of these elements, portraying either an emotional and rational appeal, produced differences in recall rates, brand and advertisement attitude, and purchase intention. Other scholars have also explored attitude and purchase intention as it related to emotional and rational appeals in advertisements for low-end versus high-end products (Akbari, 2015); from a viewing time perspective, where participants spent more time reading the copy of ads with rational appeals than viewing ads with emotional appeals in the form of pictures (Grigaliunaite & Pileliene, 2016); and from a consumer response angle where rational appeals are preferred over emotional appeals, regardless of age or gender (Keshari & Jain, 2016).

Since the current study's goal is to explore the appeals used in the Super Bowl LI ads, a review of scholarly work on advertising appeals specifically analyzing television commercials and social media posts is necessary, especially considering those two media are where Super Bowl promotions are primarily generated. One such study was conducted by Zarantonello, Schmitt, and Jedidi (2014). Their purpose was to explore brand knowledge based on a content analysis of television commercials from

more than 20 countries, with varying levels of economic development. They used functional (rational) versus experiential (emotional) appeals, as well as global versus local appeals. Results revealed that emotional appeals had a more powerful relationship in more economically developed countries regarding brand knowledge variables, including brand attitude, uniqueness, and awareness. Kim, Freling, and Grisaffe (2013) also found that the most effective Super Bowl commercials, in terms of return on investment for brands that aired a Super Commercial, were ones that incorporated an emotional appeal.

Relating to appeals used in a sports context, Ellerbee (2001) content analyzed 137 commercials to understand differences in which appeal was used most frequently alongside sports figures and their status, by sport, by gender, and by product type. The author found that imitation and humor appeals were most frequently utilized in commercials. Conversely, ethical, cleanliness, rational, security, and sexual attraction appeals were used the least. Additionally, the type of appeal used in commercials varied by sport. For example, while the humor appeal was found to be most prevalent across sports, the imitation appeal was used more frequently for tennis and basketball focused commercials, while a dependability appeal was used more often for golf related products. Regarding athlete status, gender, and product type, both imitation and humor appeals were activated more frequently (Ellerbee, 2001).

Advertising through social media is a must for brands in today's media climate (Proulx, 2015; Weller, 2017). Proulx (2015) advises brands to allocate more money towards social media marketing, avoid posting irrelevant content, and engage with a variety of platforms, not just one. Weller (2017) penned an article for AdWeek arguing why brands must incorporate social media dollars in their media budgets during the Super Bowl. She posited that the return on investment in social media promotions far outweighs the money spent on a televised commercial. This is because viewership, engagement, and attention to branded content are higher via social media platforms, especially during a high-profile event, as is the Super Bowl.

A brand promoting their wares on social media is even more important in relation to sports on a broad level because consumers are increasingly viewing sports content on social media platforms (Egan, n.d.; Nichols, 2017). An emerging trend is for television networks to partner with social media services so that games and other major sporting events can be streamed via Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat, among other platforms (Egan, n.d.; Joseph, 2017; Neely, 2017).

Taylor (1999) developed a Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel based upon the previous work of scholars who theorized about message appeals relating to advertising. Taylor's wheel is broken into two broad advertising analysis categories - the transmission view and the ritual view. According to Golan and Zaidner (2008), the transmission view is focused on logic-based information, similar to the informational strategy, and is further sub-categorized into three segments: ration, acute need, and routine. Ration is centered on information in an ads message, ads using the acute need strategy are primarily for immediate purchases, and routine message appeals serve as a reminder for consumers to continue purchasing products that they buy on a regular basis. The ritual view is similar to the transformational approach and somewhat comparable to Felton's description of the consumer-based strategy approach. Within the ritual view, the advertising appeal is focused on the self-worth of consumers and is subcategorized into ego, social, and sensory. Ego messages communicate how the product will enhance or change, for the better, the consumer's self-confidence. Social messages incorporate a sense that purchasing a product is a collaborative effort. Finally, the sensory message

appeals center on the five senses - smell, touch, hearing, taste, and/or sight (Golan & Zaidner, 2008; Taylor, 1999).

Taylor's (1999) wheel has been applied in various contexts including Tsai and Lancaster's (2012) exploration of direct-to-consumer television commercials. They found, through their content analysis of approximately 100 prescription drug commercials, a mixture of transmission and ritual strategies, where commercials often incorporated both information and ego-based elements in the messages. Golan and Zaidner (2008) examined viral ads in conjunction with the strategy wheel. Results revealed that the ritual view was utilized in almost 60% of viral ads with the subcategory, ego, also being implemented most frequently. Additionally, humor was the most common appeal used in the viral ads. In a similar vein to this study, Kim, McMillan, and Hwang (2005) analyzed commercials and websites of advertisers during the 38th Super Bowl in 2004. Utilizing Taylor's (1999) wheel, and other message/creative strategy models, results indicated that the Super Bowl commercials were more transformational in the advertising messages, while the website messages skewed towards an informational message strategy. Furthermore, a sensory strategy was found to be more prevalent in television commercials, yet, routine and ego message strategies were regularly found in both commercials and websites.

For the current study, the appeals examined will focus on Taylor's (1999) message strategy wheel. These include either transmission or ritual views in the advertising messaging and are a larger part of the overall advertising strategy. More specifically, the focus of this paper is to understand if and how the brands promoted in Super Bowl LI television commercials and social media posts strategically appealed to a consumer's ego, peer influences, senses, habits, needs, or logic.

Advertising Creative Strategy

Strategies are necessary to win football games, to overcome conflict in military situations, to succeed in the political arena and to persuade consumers to engage with a brand through advertising means. An advertiser must have a well-defined strategy, or plan of attack, in order to meet specific objectives (Darnay & Magee, 2007; Alstiel & Grow, 2017; Felton, 2013). Advertising strategy is defined as "the overall marketing or selling approach" (Barry, 2016, p. 43). It is the "what" (Taylor, 1999, p. 7) that is being featured in the advertisement. Each advertising objective typically has a strategy to go along with it. Tactics employed for an advertisement, regardless of medium, cannot be addressed without a proper strategy in place (Alstiel & Grow, 2017). In order to formulate the right strategy in advertising, elements including product features and benefits, target market, product positioning, and media planning must be outlined (Darnay & Magee, 2007; Alstiel & Grow, 2017; Barry, 2016; Felton, 2013).

Felton (2013) elaborates on two strategic approaches - one that focuses on the product and one that focus more on the consumer. The purpose of creative strategies that concentrate on the product is to create ads that pinpoint the specific product's features and benefits, while the consumer strategy approach is concerned with advertising messages that zero in on how a consumer can see a particular brand improving their lives. This manifests itself through cultivating a brand image, consumer lifestyle, and attitude (Felton, 2013).

Regarding advertising strategy via social media, digital media guru, Gary Vaynerchuk penned an entire book likening social media strategy to boxing strategy (Vaynerchuk, 2013). Similar to the jabs boxers take at their opponents in a boxing ring, so too should brands take via social media against

competing brands. These strategic jabs come in the form of appeals used, level of native content and relevant, timely posts (Vaynerchuk, 2013). Ashley and Tuten (2015) found that top brands primarily use a functional approach in their message strategies on social media, meaning how a product functions or should be used by consumers. Coursaris, van Osch, & Balogh (2016) reported differences in message strategies employed on the Facebook pages of Delta Airlines, Wal-Mart, and McDonald's. Results revealed that Wal-Mart and McDonald's message strategies were primarily transformational, whereas Delta Airlines posted messages that were more informational in nature.

Advertising executive, Rosser Reeves, is often credited with naming and expanding upon the idea of the USP (Veksner, 2015). A USP, an informational strategy, is "a specific promise of benefit unique to the brand, one that the competition either did not or could not claim" (Felton, 2013, p. 48). User image, brand image and use occasion are all transformational strategies and focus on the user, the brand, or the situation in which the product/brand is typically used, respectively (Kim, McMillan, Hwang, 2005). In terms of creative strategy, Kim et al., (2005) found that user image was most prominent in TV commercials, while the pre-emptive strategy was the leading strategy in web content for Super Bowl XXXVII brands. The pre-emptive strategy uses messages that portray the brand as being the first to make a claim about a product's attribute, before the competition can make the same claim (Abraham, 2005). Specific creative strategies that will be addressed in this current study are the unique selling proposition (USP), user image, brand image, and use occasion (Kim, McMillan, Hwang, 2005).

According to advertising experts, the strategy of a campaign must be determined before the tactics of a campaign are implemented (Altstiel & Grow, 2017; Barry, 2016). The current study is interested in which tactics, primarily how humor and characters featured, were used as tactics in the Super Bowl LI commercials and social media posts. What follows is a synthesis of the relevant literature that addresses the advertising tactics that have been used in both television and social media.

Tactics

According to Taylor (1999), since the strategy of an advertising message appeal is the "what" being said, the tactics or creative elements used in the message are considered "how it is said" (p. 7). Scholars advise that the tactics, or how an ad will be executed, should always support and follow the strategy (Altstiel & Grow, 2017; Arens, Schaefer, & Weigold, 2015; Barry, 2016; Clow & Baack, 2004; Felton, 2013). Advertising tactics include deciding on the right medium for brand promotion, the best offers to pitch (e.g., coupons, gift certificates, contests) and numerous design decisions like choosing which type of headline is best used to selecting the right visual that enhances the copy to choosing colors that resonate with the intended audience (Clow & Baack, 2004; Hagen & Golombisky, 2017). Other tactics include the tone of voice and characters utilized in order to capture the accurate message strategy (Felton, 2013).

Humor in advertising was initially frowned upon because ad executives felt that humor would detract from the message, thus, a more practical, informative approach was primarily implemented (Veksner, 2015). As legendary ad man, David Ogilvy, stated "nobody buys from a clown" (Veksner, 2015, p. 98). However, humor as a tactic in advertising messages became more prevalent in the 1960s when advertising saw a huge shift in creativity (Veksner, 2015).

Scholarship regarding humor used in advertising is abundant, especially when examining how it is used as a tactic in television (e.g., Alden, Mukherjee, & Hoyer, 2000; Brooks, Bichard & Craig, 2016; Woltman Elpers, Mukherjee, & Hoyer, 2004; Scharrer, Bergstrom, Paradise, & Ren, 2006); radio

(e.g., Berg & Lippman, 2001; Duncan & Nelson, 1985; Flaherty, Weinberger, & Gulas, 2004); print (e.g., Blanc & Brigaud, 2014; Schwarz, Hoffman, & Hutter, 2015); or across a mix of media platforms (e.g., Förster & Brantner, 2016).

Veksner (2015) notes that although humor in advertising was typically witty in nature, it evolved to include other genres of comedy including “broad comedy, irony and dark humour” (p. 98). One study that examined the comedic genre of parodies is Sabri and Michel’s (2014) experiment of how humorous brand posts via Facebook are received by consumers. The authors manipulated a print ad for McDonald’s where visuals and taglines were either non-humorous or humorous using satire. The authors sought to understand how level of message credibility along with humor would affect attention to the post, attitudes about advertising parodies, likelihood of shareability of the post, purchase intention, and brand attitude. Results revealed that the stronger the claim credibility was, coupled with humor, generated higher attention to the post, better attitudes toward parodied ads, and a higher likelihood that the post would be shared. Conversely, results revealed brand purchase intentions and brand attitudes towards McDonald’s was lower.

Humor and violence in Super Bowl ads were the focus of Blackford, Gentry, Harrison, and Carlson’s (2011) content analysis of 180 commercials that were aired during the 2005, 2007, and 2009 Super Bowls. The authors found, overwhelmingly, that actions involving humor (versus violence) were more prevalent in the commercials. However, as the years progressed, the Super Bowl television commercials featured an increase in and a high level of both humorous and violent acts, which the authors concluded to be the most popular type of commercial based on analyzing the scores from USA Today’s Ad Meter and AdBowl.com.

For almost 30 years, USA Today’s Ad Meter has been a go-to source for brands to gauge how consumers like their Super Bowl commercials (Siegel, 2018). USA Today’s Ad Meter is a public opinion poll where age-appropriate participants, from the United States, must register to be a part of the voting system. Voters must watch all nationally aired Super Bowl ads, as posted by USA Today, and rate their favorite ads on a scale from one (worst rating) to 10 (excellent) rating. The commercial with the highest ratings based on voter opinions is declared the overall top Super Bowl commercial for a specific year (Siegel, 2018). In addition to the Blackford et al. (2011) study, other scholars have also used the Ad Meter system as a component to their analysis of Super Bowl commercials (e.g., Deitz, Royne, Peasley, Huang, & Coleman, 2016; Johnson & Lee, 2011). The current study will examine the 2017 USA Today Ad Meter ratings to understand the impact that message appeals and creative strategies had on consumers who voted on the commercials aired during Super Bowl LI.

The use of characters in ads is also a tactic that brands have long used in their promotions. One of the first brand characters was the Quaker Oats man who came on the scene in the 19th century (Veksner, 2015). However, not all brand characters are manufactured in the animated sense. Felton (2013) advises that the choice of brand character is significant in telling the brand’s story and can come in the form of a brand’s executive, founding members, or anyone else, living or dead, that can get at the heart of the brand’s values, personality, and message. According to Belch and Belch (2004), source credibility often increases when the character representing the brand is seen as experienced and trustworthy, which is often why some organizations will incorporate their president or CEO into the advertising tactics. Brand characters have also manifested as paid celebrities, including movie and television stars and athletes (Veksner, 2015). The use of celebrities as a character creates risk due to the

attention brought on the brand when controversies surrounding a celebrity brand endorser are unveiled (Belch & Belch, 2004). Conversely, advertising saw a shift in the 1960's from using brand characters that were primarily aesthetically pleasing to hiring regular looking people so that consumers could relate better to the ad and the brand (Veksner, 2015). One of the most recent ad campaigns that bypassed models and instead utilized everyday people, with an emphasis on diversity, as their brand characters, originated from the clothing retail brand, Gap (Beltrone, 2017). This move by Gap was to counteract the fashion industry's long-standing negligence regarding diversity in their ad campaigns (Beltrone, 2017).

Research regarding the use of characters in television commercials has examined the role gender plays in commercials using both boys and girls for products that target children (e.g., Larson, 2001); use of animated characters as spokespeople (Callcott & Lee, 1994); the prevalence and portrayal of older adults in Super Bowl commercials (Brooks, Bichard, & Craig, 2016); and how characters were integrated in commercials during children's programming (Connor, 2006). In terms of using sports figures as brand characters, Goodman, Duke, & Sutherland (2002) aimed to understand how Olympians are portrayed as heroes in television commercials and to delineate any possible gender differences between male and female Olympians. Through a qualitative content analysis and semiological analysis, the authors found that most of the Olympic characters were classified within the Warrior archetype, regardless of gender. This means that Olympians were featured as courageous, disciplined, and as problem-solvers. Moreover, differences in gender concerning the Warrior archetype were found in the commercials, including Olympic men featured as battle-ready, while Olympic women were portrayed as triumphant because of their accomplishments, along with often being sexually objectified (Goodman, Duke, & Sutherland, 2002).

While the literature shows that much has been studied concerning advertising appeals, strategies, and tactics, there are still questions that linger, especially when it comes to how advertisers curate their strategic playbooks when promoting their products on one of the largest and most costly stages, the Super Bowl. Thus, this study investigated the following research questions:

- RQ1: What message appeals were used by brands in television advertisements and social media during Super Bowl LI?
- RQ2: Did brand message appeals and creative strategies differ for television advertising versus social media?
- RQ3: What creative strategies were used by brands in television advertisements and social media during Super Bowl LI?
- RQ4: How often was humor used as a tactic by brands in television advertising and social media during Super Bowl LI?
- RQ5: Was there a relationship between message appeals and creative strategies used overall by brands during the Super Bowl event?
- RQ6: Did message appeals and/or creative strategies have an impact on consumer preferences for the Super Bowl television commercials (Ad Meter ratings)?
- RQ7: Was there a difference in the types of people featured in advertisements based on media?

METHODS

The research questions were addressed through a quantitative content analysis of the national commercials aired during the 2017 Super Bowl on February 5th as well as the social media posts from the advertised brands on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook throughout that day.

Population & Sampling

The population for this study consisted of all national TV commercials aired during Super Bowl LI. Regional or local advertisements, promotions for upcoming TV shows, or spots promoting the commercially sponsored half-time and post-game shows were excluded. This resulted in 56 commercials from 49 brands. The authors collected data for each brand from the three social media platforms two weeks after the air-date of the Super Bowl to ensure comparable interactivity measures. All original posts were collected, excluding replies or comments to specific users. Retweets with original content were included, resulting in 36 Instagram posts, 93 Facebook posts and 463 tweets (592 total messages).

Content was analyzed at two levels. The macro level pertained to the brand and examined the level of cross-platform integration and frequency of messaging, while the micro level assessed each individual message and consisted of variables evaluating message appeals, creative strategies, humor, type of content, character representation, and consumer affect for Super Bowl TV commercials (USA Today Ad Meter scores).

Coding Procedures and Training

The codebook consisted of each of the variables discussed above and was based on definitions and examples provided by previous research. Two authors served as coders and went through training to ensure they were able to view the content in the same way and independently code the content (Neuendorf, 2002). The training consisted of all authors discussing the codebook to clarify any confusion in the definitions. Coders then used the codebook to code similar posts and commercials outside the scope of sample to allow the coders to become familiar with the content without the potential of influencing the final sample. After two rounds of coding content independently and discussing discrepancies, the coders failed to find any systematic differences in their application of the coding scheme. Finally, the coders independently coded 77 (11.86%) items from the sample, selected through a stratified random sample, to establish intercoder reliability. Data collected from the first author was included in the final analysis. Intercoder reliability was calculated using percent agreement and Cohen's Kappa; reliability scores ranged from .82 or higher and had a percent agreement of 88.31% or higher for all variables. The remaining content was divided equally between the two coders.

Variables of Interest

Type of content was examined based on medium (TV, Instagram, Twitter or Facebook) and origin (original content or content from a secondary source).

Message Appeals & Creative Strategy. Dominant message appeals were based on Taylor's (1999) six categories: ego, social, sensory, routine, acute need, rational and none of the above. Creative strategy was based on Kim, McMillan and Hwang's (2005) study and included the following classifications: comparative, unique selling propositions, hyperbole, user image, brand image, use occasion and none of the above. The dominant creative strategy was selected for each message. Additionally, humor was coded as present or absent.

Character Portrayal. Major character presence was examined through an adaptation of Kim, Freling and Grisaffe (2013). For a character to be classified as a major character, the advertisement or

message would be significantly changed without their presence. Characters were coded as: celebrity, animals (real or animated), animated spokes character, athletes, children, average person, no character present, no visual at all, or other. Coders selected all that applied and then coded for race (all white, all non-white, or mixed), gender (all male, all female, mixed) and age (all child/teen, all adult, all elderly, or mixed).

Consumer Affect. Consumer affect was evaluated based on the Ad Meter score for each national commercial. Ad Meter data consists of US citizens at least 18 years of age who registered to be a panelist. The voting process took place between February 1st and 5th, 2017. Every ad receives a score from each panelist and each panelist must vote on every ad to be included in the results. The commercials are rated on a 10-point scale with the average rating calculated by the total of all ratings divided by the number of users who rated (Siegel, 2017). This rating provides the average affect score for each commercial, with 1 as the lowest and 10 as the highest. While the Ad Meter score does not provide information for purchase intent, it does show likeability of the ad, which is a key step in understanding how consumers move from brand knowledge to attitude and finally to purchase behavior (Kelley & Turley, 2014).

Results

A total of 648 items were analyzed for this investigation. All national TV commercials aired during 2017's Super Bowl LI and approximately 600 social media posts two weeks after the game were examined. Results revealed a significant difference in the type of appeals used by platform, with rational and sensory appeals featured most often in television commercials. Social platforms used the routine appeal most often. Humor was featured prominently in TV and Twitter, while Facebook and Instagram messages were less likely to contain humorous content. The most common creative strategies used were use occasion for TV and Facebook and brand image for Twitter and Instagram. Finally, the data were examined for correlations between the types of appeals used and creative strategy as well as the impact on consumer affect as revealed in USA Today's Ad Meter rankings.

The first research question pertained to brand usage of appeals in both TV and social media messages. All TV commercials contained an appeal, while social media posts were not as committed to implementing appeals. For example, Twitter contained nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ of ads without any appeal whatsoever. Data analysis revealed a significant difference between the appeals TV and social media platforms used ($\chi^2(18) = 83.77, p < .001$). Table 1 provides a more detailed breakdown of appeal use by medium. To answer RQ2, which asked about potential differences of message appeals based on medium, results concluded that TV commercials utilized rational appeals most often (23.2%), with sensory appeals a close second (21.4). Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram messages used routine most often (28.4%, 24.7%, and 27.8%, respectively).

Table 1

Appeal Use By Medium

Appeal	Medium				
	TV	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram	Total
Ego	9(16.1%)	12(2.6%)	5(5.4%)	2(5.6%)	28(4.3%)
Social	10(17.9%)	71(15.3%)	12(12.9%)	9(25.0%)	102(15.7%)
Sensory	12(21.4%)	49(10.6%)	19(20.4%)	6(16.7%)	86(13.3%)
Routine	6(10.7%)	131(28.3%)	23(24.7%)	10(27.8%)	170(26.2%)
Acute Need	6(10.7%)	38(8.2%)	13(14.0%)	1(2.8%)	58(9.0%)
Rational	13(23.2%)	53(11.4%)	18(19.4%)	6(16.7%)	90(13.9%)
None	0	109(23.5%)	3(3.2%)	2(5.6%)	114(17.6%)
Total	56(8.7%)	463(71.4%)	93(14.4)	36(5.6)	648

The next research question evaluated creative strategy use by media. Results indicate that all television commercials and Instagram posts used a creative strategy as did most, but not all, posts via Twitter and Facebook. Table 2 provides a more detailed breakdown of creative strategy use by medium. Due to the low counts of hyperbole and comparative creative strategies (accounting for only 3% of the sample), they were removed from the analysis. To answer RQ3’s inquiry regarding differences in creative strategies based on medium, analysis of the remaining categories revealed a significant difference between media and creative strategy ($\chi^2(12) = 47.26, p < .001$). Use occasion was most common for TV and Facebook (36.5% and 36.7%, respectively) while Twitter and Instagram used brand image (45.5% and 35.3%, respectively). All Instagram and TV messages contained a creative strategy, whereas 9.1% of Twitter posts had no creative strategy featured at all.

Table 2

Creative Strategy Use By Medium

Creative Strategy	Medium				
	TV	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram	Total
Unique Selling Proposition	8(15.4%)	36(7.9%)	19(21.1%)	7(20.6%)	70(11.1%)
User Image	11(21.2%)	57(12.6%)	10(11.1%)	8(23.5%)	86(12.7%)
Brand Image	14(26.9%)	206(45.5%)	26(28.9%)	12(35.3%)	258(41.0%)

Use Occasion	19(36.5%)	113(24.9%)	33(36.7%)	7(20.6%)	172(27.3%)
None	0	41(9.1%)	2(2.2%)	0	43(6.8%)

The fourth research question assessed the use of humor by media. The majority of messages included humor ($n = 348, 53.7\%$). However, there were statistically significant differences based on media, ($\chi^2(3) = 12.94, p < .01$). TV and Twitter used humor the most (60.7% and 56.6%, respectively) while Facebook and Instagram were less likely to feature humor in their messages (43.0% and 33.3%, respectively).

The fifth research question assessed the relationship between message appeals and creative strategies. Examination of the data revealed a significant difference between appeals and creative strategies used together ($\chi^2(24) = 546.96, p < .001$). Each creative strategy was most commonly associated with a different appeal. USP was most often used with sensory appeals, user image was used most often with social appeals, brand image was used most often with routine appeals, and use occasion was used most with rational appeals. Ego was rarely associated with USP, brand image, or user image. Table 3 provides a more detailed breakdown of the collaborative use of creative strategy and appeal.

Table 3
Creative Strategy & Appeal Used

Appeal	Creative					Total
	USP	User	Brand	Use	None	
Ego	1(1.4%)	16(18.6%)	6(2.3%)	5(2.9%)	0	28(4.5%)
Social	4(5.7%)	38(44.2%)	28(10.9%)	28(16.3%)	4(9.3%)	102(16.2%)
Sensory	30(42.9%)	9(10.5%)	10(3.9%)	26(15.1%)	1(2.3%)	76(12.1%)
Routine	4(5.7%)	11(12.8%)	136(52.7%)	16(9.3%)	3(7.0%)	170(27.0%)
Acute Need	2(2.9%)	0	11(4.3%)	45(26.2%)	0	58(9.2%)
Rational	26(37.1%)	1(1.2%)	9(3.5%)	46(26.7%)	3(7.0%)	85(13.5%)
None	3(4.3%)	11(12.8%)	58(22.5%)	6(3.5%)	32(74.4%)	110(17.5%)
Total	70(11.1%)	86(13.7%)	258(41.0%)	172(27.3%)	43(6.8%)	629

RQ6 was concerned with any possible impact message appeals had on consumer affect as demonstrated through Ad Meter ratings. Further analysis revealed there was a significant effect of appeal on Ad Meter ratings [$F(5, 50) = 2.65, p = .03$], however post hoc comparisons using Games-Howell revealed no significant differences between appeals. Additionally, to answer RQ6, regarding any impact of creative strategy on Ad Meter ratings, results indicated no significant effect [$F(2, 50) = 1.36, p = .263$].

The seventh, and final, research question pertained to character representation across media. A crosstabs analysis revealed a significant difference in racial representation for major characters based on medium ($\chi^2(2) = 22.23, p < .001$, with social media predominantly featuring only Caucasian individuals (70.9%), while TV was more diverse with only 44% of commercials containing solely Caucasians. Gender of major characters also significantly differed based on media, ($\chi^2(2) = 21.65, p < .001$. TV featured both genders in 56.9% of messages while social media featured only men in 61.7% of messages. Age of major characters followed the same pattern for both TV and social media. Most messages contained only adults (52.9% and 66.2%, respectively) followed by a mix of ages, all elderly and least common was all children/teens.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to examine how brands promote their products and services during one of the most highly viewed sporting events, 2017's Super Bowl LI. Not only did the current study analyze television commercials, but also the content in the social media posts for brands advertising during the Super Bowl. Our goal was to investigate which message appeals and creative strategies were implemented in the commercials and social media posts, based partly on Taylor's (1999) Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel. Additionally, this research aimed to delineate potential differences in appeals and strategies based on medium as well as explore the use of humor and characters in brand promotions during Super Bowl LI.

Our findings indicate a strong use of appeal in television commercials, but less so in social media, depending on the specific platform. Whereas every national television commercial aired during Super Bowl LI utilized an appeal, the same could not be found for brand posts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Our findings also show that appeal use differed based on medium. For example, Super Bowl television commercials in the sample used rational appeals very often. These appeals are rooted in specific information about a brand's product that consumers use to make a logical purchasing decision (Clow & Baack, 2004). A brand that used a rational appeal in their commercial during the Super Bowl was H&R Block. In their commercial they introduce Watson to help improve their services and ensure people receive higher tax returns when using H&R Block. This deviates from the findings of Kim, Freling, and Grisaffe's (2013) analysis of Super Bowl commercials where they found emotional appeals to be more prevalent than rational appeals. Concerning brands' social media posts in this study, the routine appeal was the most commonly used. Routine appeals send a quick reminder message to consumers to continue buying products they use continuously (Golan and Zaidner, 2008). An example of this type of appeal implemented was when Avocados from Mexico brand posted on Twitter with an image of their logo next to a bowl of guacamole and the text "guac?"

Similar results emerged regarding creative strategies. Whereas all TV commercials and Instagram posts contained a creative strategy, some social media posts, depending on the platform, employed little to no creative strategy. The use occasion creative strategy (message centers on using a product during a certain time) was found to be more prevalent in television ads and Facebook posts, while the brand image creative strategy (messages focused on how the brand desires to be perceived by consumers) was applied in more Twitter and Instagram promotions. An example of the use occasion creative strategy was when Febreze used "halftime #BathroomBreak" in several of their tweets. This clearly emphasized the actual occasion of using the Febreze product. Conversely, brand image was

shown when Kia showed an image of the trunk of a vehicle zoomed in on the “eco/hybrid” sticker. These results fall somewhat in line with Kim, McMillan, and Hwang’s (2005) study that compared strategies used in Super Bowl commercials versus brand websites. They found that brands differed in the overall strategy used in television commercials and websites, but that the specific creative strategy used was similarly integrated across platform. Furthermore, while our results indicate the almost non-existent use of hyperbole in ads, Kim, McMillan, and Hwang (2005) found the opposite. Hyperbole in ads utilizes exaggeration in messages for attention getting purposes (Barbu-Kleitsch, 2015). Perhaps the lack of hyperbole found in brands’ Super Bowl LI commercials and social media posts is due to the ongoing trend of consumers’ desire for more brand authenticity and transparency (Daniel & Robinson, 2015; Kline, 2016).

Additionally, our study found that the combination of appeals and strategies varied widely, per brand, and was unpredictable. For example, one brand’s Super Bowl promotion that used unique selling proposition as the strategy would then couple with a sensory appeal, whereas others would combine USP with a rational appeal. This speaks to the versatility of both appeals and strategies and the media available for these messages to appear. Again, this aligns with Kim, McMillan, and Hwang (2005) who found “no instances of a unified creative strategy with different message strategies” (p. 70).

While the current analysis did not reveal any significance pertaining to Ad Meter ratings and the type of creative strategies and appeals used, the authors did find that humor was rampant in brands’ Super Bowl ads, particularly via television commercials and Twitter. Finally, the use of characters in brand promotions revealed a heavy emphasis on white characters in brands’ social media posts, while television commercials featured a more diverse display of actors. The same is true regarding gender, with a combination of men and women found more in television commercials while women were not as prevalent in social media posts. Finally, commercials and social media posts primarily featured adults as actors. Thus, the portrayal of ages, gender, and ethnic diversity is not consistent across media platform and should be investigated in future research.

Just as a playbook guides athletes to fulfill their goals, a strong advertising strategy can provide a solid foundation for engagement with consumers. The current study looked to past research as a springboard for analysis of various message appeals and creative strategies used during Super Bowl LI. Results indicate that advertisers made great efforts to feature appeals and strategic messaging that fits with each unique platform. Future study is needed to address the lack of consistency noted and further examine the issue of diversity portrayals in social media platforms.

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