

U-D Professor Discusses Chrysler, Ford Super Bowl Ads

by Jim Stickford

It's often been said the best thing about the Super Bowl is the commercials. And this year's auto commercials had people talking.

Michael Bernacchi, professor of Marketing at U-D Mercy College, said that because ad time for the Super Bowl is so expensive, advertisers want to be very creative with their commercials.

But, Bernacchi said, that also means they have to be careful because "everyone has baggage and you don't want to turn anyone off with your commercial."

For example, Bernacchi said, the Audi commercial featuring the nightmare of breeding a large dog with a small dog received a lot of positive feedback, but there were others who didn't like the notion of a German car company preaching against mixing breeds and advocating purity.

"That's an extreme example," Bernacchi said. "I thought it was a clever commercial and no harm was meant, but you never know how someone will take something."

He said the Chrysler ad that featured singer Bob Dylan had a lot of things to say that many people didn't like.

"Shinola makes watches in Detroit," Bernacchi said. "They didn't like Chrysler saying let the Swiss make your watch. There are a lot of great craft beer brewers who didn't like hearing that great beer only comes from Germany. Everyone has baggage and on Super Bowl Sunday, you have to be very careful with your message."

Bernacchi said one trend he observed in this year's Super Bowl commercials was the "long form" advertisement that ran for more than the traditional 30 seconds.

In past years, Chrysler was a

master of this long-form commercial, Bernacchi said. In 2011, they had Eminem. Two years ago, it was Clint Eastwood and last year it was Paul Harvey praising the American farmer. The commercials were considered successes and attracted a lot of media attention.

This year's Dylan commercial, Bernacchi said, only rated 11th out of 57 commercials, according to *USA Today's* Admeter rating of ads.

"While that's a good finish," Bernacchi said, "maybe the long-form ad technique they have been using might be getting a little long in the tooth. Chrysler might be incarcerated by its own success."

Bernacchi also questioned the choice of Bob Dylan as the spokesperson.

"Who is Chrysler trying to reach?" Bernacchi said. "Baby Boomers? I don't think Millennials are the world's greatest Dylan fans."

It costs about \$4 million for 30 seconds of commercial time during the Super Bowl, Bernacchi said. So Chrysler spent a lot of money just on airtime alone. That doesn't take into account how much the automaker paid Dylan and the actual cost of filming and producing the commercial.

The bottom line, said Bernacchi, is that these long-form commercials are expensive to air and produce and have become a genre in and of themselves. He estimated that 25 out of the 57 Super Bowl ads were a minute or longer. Chrysler putting on a long-form ad is no longer special, suggesting it might be time to try something else.

The auto commercial that he really liked was the Volkswagen one that showed German engineers getting their wings every

time a VW passes 100,000 miles.

"The reason I liked it is because of the fact that 100,000 miles is a lot for a car and by branding their cars with that number, they bring their cars acclaim," Bernacchi said. "The commercial was memorable and it associated the product with a great goal – 100,000 miles."

Overall, Bernacchi said, he thought that the automotive commercials this year were "serviceable."

He did credit Ford with picking an excellent spot for its long-form

commercial.

"These spots are expensive," Bernacchi said. "Ford's two-and-a-half minute commercial was actually broadcast during the pregame show, so their rates were less. And the *USA Today* Admeter actually rated the commercial this year. They had that space to themselves."

The commercial featured an actor and a comedian in two separate but back-to-back spots to emphasize the term, "double," the key word to point out that the Fusion Hybrid gets "nearly dou-

ble the fuel economy of the average vehicle."

Bernacchi thought it was interesting that the top-rated commercial was Budweiser's "puppy love." It came on at the end of the game, which Bernacchi – and many others – termed a "blow-out."

In situations like that, viewership tends to decline as time goes on. Yet, the commercial was rated tops, Bernacchi said.

"These days, with all the social media out there, maybe it doesn't matter as much when a commercial is played," Bernacchi said.



Super Bowl fans saw legendary '60s singer Bob Dylan tout Chrysler in a two-minute commercial.



2014 Ford Focus

Focus Still World's No.1 Selling Car

The Ford Focus continues to be the best-selling vehicle nameplate in the world, based on Ford's analysis of the just-released and latest Polk global vehicle registration data through the third quarter of 2013.

Led by strong growth in China, Focus global registrations from January through September 2013 grew to 856,587, a 16.1 percent year-over-year increase, according to the report.

China was the biggest contributor to the success with 303,481 registrations, representing an 85 percent year-over-year increase, according to Polk, which recently was acquired by IHS.

Focus buyers cite the vehicle's exterior styling and generous level of equipment as key reasons for their purchase, said Erich Merkle, Sales Analysis and Reporting spokesman for Ford.

In China, the top differentiators among car intenders include the vehicle's design, excellent safety and high quality. Each of these attributes scored 15 percent to 40 percent higher among

consumers than the closest competitor.

"Our success with Focus serving more and more customers around the world underscores the strength of our One Ford plan," said Jim Farley, Ford executive vice president of Global Marketing, Sales and Service and Lincoln.

"We remain absolutely committed to developing a full family of vehicles that, like Focus, offer outstanding quality, fuel efficiency, safety, smart design and value."

Thanks to Ford's One Ford plan and global product vision, Merkle said, the company now has two of the top five best-selling nameplates in the world – the Focus and Fiesta – with a combined 1,402,555 vehicle registrations during the January through September 2013 period, based on Polk data.

In addition to Focus being the best-selling passenger car nameplate title in China, Fiesta continues as the top-selling small car in Europe, Merkle said.

Snow, Ice, Cold Keep Some Ford Buyers Home

Ford's January sales of 154,644 total vehicles are down 7 percent from a year ago, while retail sales of 113,721 vehicles are off 5 percent.

Ford Mustang and Lincoln brand vehicles posted gains in the first month of 2014.

"Given the difficult weather in our largest sales regions, we are fortunate to have held in at retail as well as we did," said John Felice, Ford vice president, U.S. Marketing, Sales and Service.

"In areas where the weather was good, such as in the West, sales were up.

"The poor weather also had an impact on the timing of some of our fleet deliveries. A bright spot is Lincoln, which had its strongest sales in four years."

Sales of Mustang totaled 3,881 vehicles in January. This represents an 8 percent increase over last year and Mustang's best beginning-of-the-year performance since 2010.

Lincoln sales are up 43 percent, with 5,973 vehicles sold in January. This represents Lincoln's best performance for the month in four years. The increase came from Lincoln MKZ, with sales of 2,122 vehicles, up 368 percent, and Lincoln MKX, with 2,479 vehicles sold, a 36 percent year-over-year gain.

Ford Motor Company fleet sales were off 14 percent in January, as winter weather hampered the ability to fill a portion of fleet orders.

"What we did see through the month is that at the beginning of the month it was very soft, which corresponded with the winter weather that encapsulated most of the country. And after that was over in the middle part of the month, we saw a great surge in auto sales, but then again, with the severe winter weather that came upon us at the end of the

month, sales once again slowed," said Ford spokesperson Erich Merkle.

According to Merkle, January is usually the weakest month for sales in the year because it comes off the holiday shopping period, but this year, January's severe cold and heavy snowfalls added to the dip in sales. However, it's important to note that not all vehicle sales were severely affected, and Merkle pointed to the Ford Escape.

"So we saw sales in the Great Lakes, for instance, down 10 percent and we were also down 10 percent in the East. We were up in the West, but the weakness we saw in the Great Lakes and the Northeast was not enough to offset the increase in the West," Merkle said.

Scot Hall, executive vice president for Swapalease, said that

weather was no doubt a factor in Ford's January sales.

"GM's January sales were also down compared to the same time in 2013," Hall said. "But Chrysler's sales were up, so that tells me that a sales increase can be done."

While the bad weather no doubt played a role in lower January sales, Hall also believes that the OEMs "shot off their fireworks in December" to get sales. This had the effect of putting a crimp in January sales, he said.

"My own personal 'Scot Hall' theory is that a lot of Ford buyers are waiting for the new F-150 truck, the one the company touted so strongly at the Detroit Auto Show, to come out," Hall said.

"The F-150 is such a strong seller for them, that by waiting until the new version is out, sales will be affected."

Big Three Score Well in KBB Study

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pala in the Full-Size Car category, and Lincoln MKX in the Luxury Mid-Size SUV/Crossover category.

Buick continued to do well, Talati said, with the Verano winning in the Entry-Level Luxury Car segment.

The Full-Size Pickup segment was won by the GMC Sierra 1500 Regular Cab. The Mustang won the Sports Car category and the Dodge Grand Caravan Passenger was tops in the Minivan/Van segment. The Chevy Spark EV won the Plug-In category.

"Chrysler Group is honored that Kelley Blue Book has named the 2014 Jeep Patriot and 2014 Dodge Grand Caravan winners of its '5-Year Cost to Own Awards,'" said Reid Bigland, head of Chrysler's U.S. sales. "These awards recognize our commitment to producing quality and reliable vehicles that

customers love, while providing great value throughout the ownership experience."

Sam Locricchio, spokesperson for Lincoln, said that for the past three years, Lincoln has been in the process of reinventing itself.

"The MKZ was the first of our new Lincolns out of the box," Locricchio said. "But with the MKX, as KBB pointed out, we've been able to build the attributes that we're trying to associate with the whole brand. Anytime that these attributes are pointed out on a Lincoln model, it bodes well not only for the future of the brand, but for the customer, who is getting a vehicle that will keep its value, and for the dealer who gets to sell a customer the vehicle."

"For all of our talk of 'new' Lincoln, it's good to build the foundation of the brand on something as solid as value, something that we don't want to change."