



THE PRESENCE OF TECH COMPANIES IN SUPER BOWL ADS FROM 2021 TO 2025

Aleksandra Belačić*,
[0009-0003-1152-1645]

Slavko Alčaković
[0000-0003-4062-7214]

Singidunum University,
Belgrade, Serbia

Abstract:

The main idea behind this paper is to examine the presence of companies belonging to the tech industry at the Super Bowl, the annual championship game of the U.S. National Football League, which enjoys the status of a mass cultural event both in its home country and all across the globe. In the theoretical part of the paper, the concept of the Super Bowl is presented alongside statistical data that highlight its global significance and, by extension, the prestige associated with advertising during its commercial breaks. Additionally, this part of the paper outlines the history of Super Bowl advertising within the broader tech sector, focusing on IT companies. The paper's practical part presents the results of research that involved reviewing all ads aired during the Super Bowl over the past five years – 312 in total – with the aim of determining the representation of companies belonging to the tech sector. The results are presented in table form, followed by an explanation of the figures and additional observations on the strategies tech companies use with the aim of successfully appealing to the Super Bowl audience.

Keywords:

Super Bowl, Advertising, Television Commercials, Tech Industry, Brand Promotion.

INTRODUCTION

The advertising landscape was transformed to a great extent after the emergence of social networks, which provided opportunities for targeting people based on their location or demographic parameters like their gender, interests, or even job title. [1] Apart from that, it turned out that advertising via the Internet is on a whole other level of cost-effectiveness than traditional one, and that it also offers other cutting-edge functions, completely unheard of in the era of classic television, the most important one being measurability, that is to say, the ability to get detailed analytics for every advert. [2]

The current circumstances in the advertising industry can be described by the term "attention economy", coined to refer to the fact that companies nowadays must compete for consumer attention. [3] This practically means that there has been a reversal of the old and obviously outdated concept of "information economy", i.e., adaptation to circumstances in which information is plentiful and attention is a limited and therefore scarce resource. [4]

Correspondence:

Aleksandra Belačić

e-mail:

aleksandra.belacic.22@singimail.rs





So, at present, information is cheap and attention is expensive – and it's up to advertisers to find the best way to stand out, grab attention of the public and encourage them to try the offered products and services. It is a matter of debate whether television advertising is still a proper way of doing so, with one line of thought suggesting it's not, and that it often makes a much smaller impact on sales than it was previously estimated. [5] According to the proponents of said theory, in many cases, companies spent more on commercials than they earned back in extra sales, resulting in a negative return on investment. [5] According to the second theory, it doesn't matter where the advertising takes place as people remember brands, they've seen in Internet ads just as well as those seen in TV ads. [6] The third theory suggests that, in spite of the growth of new technologies and digital media, television still enjoys the status of the most effective advertising platform. [7]

Although television commercials are increasingly being replaced by those on the Internet, the Super Bowl, the single most prestigious event for traditional advertising, remains unshaken by this burgeoning trend. Since its establishment 58 years ago, the spectacular broadcast of the finals of the American NFL league has had consistently colossal viewership among U.S. viewers. [8] According to the author Lotz, the fact that the Super Bowl still has the power to gather the nation around the same program, as in the golden era of television, makes it as much a high-profile advertising event as it is a championship game. [9]

Huge viewer base, along with the lasting buzz that all commercials aired during each and every Super Bowl bring with them, motivates the advertising industry's top dogs to pay fortunes for mere seconds of advertising space. In addition, they skilfully employ humour or sentimentality during the process of creating their ads, all in an attempt to make long-lasting impact by engaging with viewers' emotions. [10]

The idea behind this paper is to examine the representation of companies from the tech sphere (that is, those operating in areas of start-ups, innovations, electronics, gadgets, applications, artificial intelligence, robotics, etc.) at the Super Bowl in the span of the last five years, as well as to further investigate the strategies they apply in advertising at such a highly visible global showstopper.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUPER BOWL

Founded back in 1967 [11], the Super Bowl, the NFL season finale, where the two best teams compete for the championship title, is always held at the peak of the winter season [12], while the location of the event is determined based on the results of the bidding process, where the hosting city that meets specific standards and criteria is chosen from among the candidates. [13]

With a live audience that constantly varies between 60 and 70k viewers (not counting the year 2021 when it was significantly reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic) [14] and an organizing budget being in between the staggering amounts of 50 and 60 million US dollars [15], the Super Bowl is classified as a sports mega-event, which not only manages to draw massive crowds but also to attract extensive attention. [16] The results of said attention include a record-breaking TV viewership that reached approximately 127.7 million during Super Bowl 2025 [17], as well as a staggering 2.83 billion engagements related to the same event, made across the most popular social networks such as Instagram, X, and YouTube. [18]

From the TV viewership-related data collected over the past 35 years, it can be seen that the numbers, although they have not always followed a growing path, have remained consistently high [17], which is not surprising since the Super Bowl has the status of the most viewed televised event in the United States. [19] Popular across all 50 states, the Super Bowl also displays the effect called "home-city" or "host-city," which practically means that the viewership of the game is roughly 20% higher than normal in the city where it is held. [20] Also, despite the fact that American football is a U.S. national sport that is rarely played abroad, the Super Bowl enjoys surprising popularity all over the world, even in territories where this sporting activity is non-existent. How much of a social phenomenon the Super Bowl is, is best illustrated by data from 2022, when its global viewers number was estimated to surpass 208 million, with 130 countries having purchased the streaming rights. [21]

The fact that the Super Bowl viewership, despite slight fluctuations, consistently stays at an extraordinarily high level allows the price of an advertising second to only ever go up. At the time of the first Super Bowl, a 30-second commercial spot cost between \$37,500 and \$42,500 [22], and in 2025 it skyrocketed to a staggering \$7 million, while at least ten of the commercial spots were later resold for over \$8 million each. [23]



According to the latest data, Super Bowl viewers are predominantly male (57%) and Caucasian (68%) with an average age of 49, median household income of \$74K (on par with the national average), and solid financial footing (35% of them surpass the \$250,000 net worth threshold). [24] This exceptional economic influence quite logically motivates companies to use the platform of the Super Bowl to advertise products that specifically satisfy said demographic.

Despite the fact that the cost of airing Super Bowl commercials has increased drastically over the years, advertisers are still motivated to spend millions of dollars creating and producing high-quality ads [25], a trend that has turned the game itself into only part of the attraction.

3. ADVERTISING AT THE SUPER BOWL

Each year, long before it is known which two teams will face off in the finals [20], advertisers go into a total frenzy to secure Super Bowl commercial slots at seemingly sky-high prices. [25] For example, the demand for ad slots in 2010 was so intense that 80% of them were sold out eight months prior to the big game. [26] Exorbitant advertising price also acts as an eliminator, allowing only top-ranking companies to appear at this prestigious event.

Prominent companies are interested in advertising during the Super Bowl not only due to the great exposure it offers, but also because viewers really pay close attention to the ads broadcast during this event, often gathering in front of the screen once they begin, which is the opposite of the typical behaviour when people tend to focus on other things or even leave the room during the commercial blocks. [26] It is precisely this characteristic that gives the Super Bowl the ability to greatly influence how consumers perceive brands, even those that are already well-established. [26]

In practice, although the Super Bowl follows the same rules as other NFL games, its broadcasts are more carefully directed due to the larger number of sponsors, longer duration and higher cost of ads, as well as the greater interest and focus of the audience. Therefore, in 2025, the organizers decided to add extra breaks to the standard number of 18 advertising blocks, bringing the total to 20. [27]

The commercials aired at the Super Bowl receive evaluation both from the general public and by a focus group formed by USA Today's Ad Meter platform. Publishing the focus group's results, which rank ads by likeability, helps creators analyse the elements of the best ads and gain insight into what works with the public.

4. THE HISTORY OF TECH AND IT COMPANIES' PRESENCE AT THE SUPER BOWL

The Super Bowl commercial breaks were traditionally filled with ads for food, alcoholic beverages, and automotive brands. [28] The first significant change in that established concept occurred during Super Bowl 2000, which was so packed with internet-related companies that it was dubbed the "dot-com Super Bowl" [29] or "e-bowl." [30] This happened as a logical outcome of the dot-com bubble, which began in 1995, and was fuelled by the already existing interest of businesses and entrepreneurs in capitalizing on the rapid growth of the Internet. [31] At the aforementioned Super Bowl, where 30-second advertising slots cost an average of \$2.2 million each, there were 36 advertisers, and 17 of them (47.22%) were internet-operated companies. [32]

Advertisements of IT companies, which are part of the larger tech industry, were present at the Super Bowl even before 2000, but to a significantly lesser extent – three in 1999, one in 1998, and one in 1997. [30] Practically, the end of the 20th century was the Internet land-grab era that led dot-coms to pursue extravagant advertising campaigns. [33] Many of those newly established businesses quickly jumped at the chance to advertise during the Super Bowl, hoping that such massive exposure would catapult them to levels of expertise and influence typical of Fortune 100 companies. [34]

The results of the dot-com companies' broke-or-break media strategy were, at best, mixed. One research study pointed out that lesser-known companies, relatively new to both the marketplace and Super Bowl advertising, had the greatest positive change in brand familiarity. At the same time, it was found that Super Bowl exposure brings little gain in brand familiarity or likeability to already well-known brands. [34] In other words, ads placed in commercial breaks of the Super Bowl can raise a company's stock price, but it typically happens only when the brand is not well known or has been suffering from a damaged reputation. [35]

The example of pets.com, an internet company that advertised at the Super Bowl 2000 only to collapse nine months later, made it clear that the marketing approach of the dot-com companies was more quantity-over-quality based and that the results would have been much better if the money had been spent more effectively on ads through targeted media. [36] Consequently, dot-com marketing is often recalled as a true overspending bacchanalia. [37]



In 2000, the U.S. TV network ABC estimated the Super Bowl audience at 130.7 million viewers, and while these numbers guaranteed high visibility for advertisers, the risks involved were enormous. [32] In other words, Super Bowl advertising was at that time a game of big risk and big reward that could put some companies into the spotlight, but also bring them crashing down. [38] The era when money was being recklessly spent therefore brought one very important lesson: those who want to advertise at the Super Bowl have to have enough insurance to allow for failure. [38]

5. RESEARCH AND RESULTS

The central idea behind our research was to evaluate the presence of tech companies at the Super Bowl in the last five years, that is, to determine whether the trend is rising, declining, or steady, as well as to determine which companies are advertising at this event and what their campaign tactics are. The initial idea was to collect the data needed for our analysis from the site Ad Meter, known for years as a reference database where all ads broadcast during the Super Bowl were located, along with their likeability score. However, due to policy changes on this site, now only the best-rated ads are displayed, instead of the entire base, which is why, for the purposes of this research, we opted to use the Super Bowl Ads website (<https://www.superbowl-ads.com/>), which contains the entire base of advertisements played during Super Bowl commercial breaks starting from 1998.

By inspecting the aforementioned database, we determined that in the period from 2021 to 2025, a total of 312 ads were broadcast during Super Bowl breaks, and we then went on assessing them in detail with the aim of calculating how many of them belong to the tech sector. It is important to point out that drawing a sharp line between what is and what is not a tech ad or industry is a very challenging task. For the purposes of this research, we have taken the position that, apart from core tech

companies, broader digital companies which operate mostly via online platforms, as well as digital commerce websites and social networks, can also be classified in that category. Having learned that other sources reporting on tech ads also include media companies primarily focused on tech-powered content production and distribution – such as Netflix, Paramount+, Peacock, etc. – we decided to consider them as well.

The findings of our research are presented in Table 1, which displays the total number of ads aired during each edition of the Super Bowl between 2021 and 2025, as well as the total number and percentage of technology ads broadcast during each of those years. From those figures, it can be seen that the ads belonging to the technology sector consistently made up more than 30% of all Super Bowl ads, reaching their peak figure of 36.23% in 2022. During the five-year period covered by our research, a total of 312 advertisements were aired during Super Bowl commercial breaks, and 104 of them were related to technology, which is why it can be concluded that the tech industry has joined food, beverage, and automotive industries in becoming one of the leading Super Bowl advertisers. By analysing the ads, we also determined that the structure of tech advertisers is extremely diverse, ranging from powerhouses like Google and YouTube to core tech companies such as OpenAI, and extending to predominantly internet-enabled businesses and e-commerce platforms like Booking, Temu, and Amazon, telecom companies like T-Mobile and Verizon, and video streaming services such as Netflix.

Strategies used by tech companies to make their products and services appeal to the public may differ, but one strong trend emerges among all of them, that being the growing focus on artificial intelligence. The strongest brands from the technological sphere have begun to design their ads in a way that highlights the possibility of practical application of their achievements in the AI domain. Most prominent examples include Microsoft's 2024 ad for its AI-powered tool, Copilot, that helps its users achieve learning and business tasks, Meta's 2025

Table 1. Overview of the Presence of Technology Companies at the Super Bowl (2021–2025)

Year	Total number of ads	Number of technology ads	Percentage of technology ads
2021	55	18	32.73%
2022	69	25	36.23%
2023	62	20	32.26%
2024	60	20	33.33%
2025	66	21	31.82%



ad for AI-powered Ray-Ban smart glasses capable of providing real-time information about viewed objects, Google's 2025 ad emphasizing the everyday utility of its AI assistant Gemini Live, as shown via a job interview preparation scenario, and OpenAI's 2025 ad presenting ChatGPT's capabilities in assisting with writing-related tasks.

6. CONCLUSION

Our research, which relates to the period from 2021 to 2025, shows that during that time frame, the ads of tech companies accounted for a significant portion of the advertising space at the Super Bowl, with more than 30% participation each year. These results coincide with the wider social picture, which is characterized by an exponential growth in the integration of new AI-based technologies into everyday household and work-related tasks. The obtained results show that tech companies, along with traditional advertisers, became regular participants in the commercial segment of this prestigious sporting mega event, thereby confirming their financial power and their desire to move away from the boundaries of technologically specialized audiences and approach the mass population.

The performance of technology companies is characterized by diversity in terms of the structure of the organizations themselves, but also in terms of the strategies they use, with majority of them relying on artificial intelligence in order to demonstrate that their exceptionally high-tech products and services can be integrated into everyday life.

It is important to note that this research has certain limitations that do not affect its results to a greater extent, concerning the criteria according to which the authors defined what tech companies are. Likewise, the limiting factor may be the quality of the used reference database, that is, whether it really includes all broadcast advertisements. A recommendation for further research on this topic would be to repeat the research in a few years to include new trends, as well as to take a look at the business results of tech companies that advertised on the Super Bowl in order to see whether they truly benefited from that exposure.

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