

Less politics, more female power: What to expect from this year's Super Bowl ads

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The Super Bowl is a colossal platform for advertisers, which this year sees female-focused brands including Olay and Bumble make their debut, alongside the usual parade of celebrity-fuelled show-stoppers.

With a hefty multimillion-dollar price tag, snagging a commercial slot during the Super Bowl isn't for the budget-restricted.

Since 2008 the average price for a 30-second ad has more than doubled, with this year's Super Bowl, which will see the Los Angeles Rams square-off against the New England Patriots on Sunday (3 February), expected to cost brands more than \$5m per slot.

With more than 100 million viewers on the day and many more catching up online, it is one of the biggest advertising platforms in the world.

Female focus

This year, brands have finally cottoned on to the fact women watch sport too, and in abundance. So much so that Procter & Gamble-owned beauty brand Olay and female-led dating app Bumble are both making their debut Super Bowl appearances.

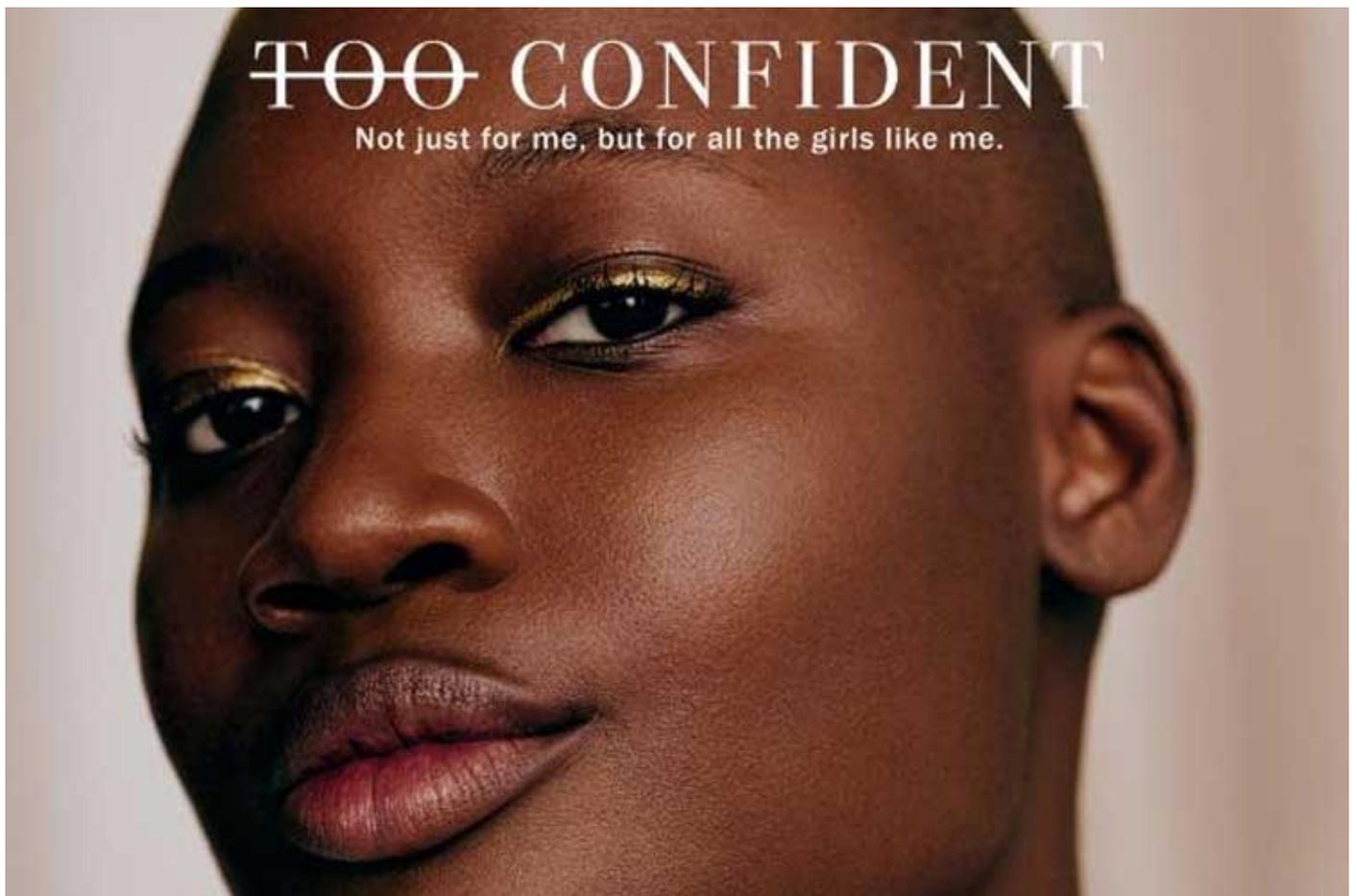
According to Forbes, women accounted for 49% of the Americans who tuned in to the Super Bowl in 2017. Women are also likely to pay more attention to ads compared to their male counterparts, according to data collected by US metrics platform TVision, which shows women are 26.1% more

focused on ads, scoring 110 on the attention scale compared to 87.2 for men.

“It’s no secret that Super Bowl ads are predominantly male-centric,” Olay brand director Stephanie Robertson says.

“We wanted to change this dynamic by reaching women on TV’s biggest stage with a message that we hope viewers will find entertaining. Olay wants all women to be bold and empowered, and in a way we’re doing just that as a brand, by showing up in a place that is historically focused on men.”

Olay is looking to celebrate women in an unusual, slightly terrifying way, which sees the brand call on former Buffy actress Sarah Michelle Gellar for a spooky spot titled ‘Killer Transformation’.



The ad, which will air during the first quarter, shows Gellar rubbing moisturiser onto her skin while a masked man appears in the mirror behind her. The spot is accompanied by the tagline, #KillerSkin.

Olay's contribution also extends off the pitch. In the lead up to the final, the brand has been running a competition for two fans to win a trip to the game in Atlanta by taking an image of their face and uploading it to Olay's online Skin Advisor service and addressing their skin concerns. The company will then tailor products to match.

Meanwhile, Bumble has enlisted tennis sensation Serena Williams for its ad called 'The ball is in her court', which see the star trying to empower women to take control of their own stories.

"We're living in a world and society where people are starting to see differently and starting to understand that we are just as strong and just as smart and just as savvy and just as business-like as any other male in this world," Williams says in the ad, which was created by a predominately female team.

Bumble, which was founded in 2014 and has 47 million users worldwide, is a dating app that only allows women to make the first move. It has since expanded its mission following the #MeToo movement and champions the slogan, 'Make the first move, in life, in love, in business'.

Adding a feminine voice to commercial breaks that are normally dominated by beer and fast-food ads will offer some much-needed variety – whether they are well received by all remains to be seen.

Peeved-off with the politics

If you thought Nike's divisive, yet much-talked about ad featuring Colin Kaepernick might have inspired other brands to take a political stand at this year's Super Bowl, you'd be wrong.



Football fans do not want ads at the match to be politically charged it seems, with 66% of Americans saying they think politically-focused Super Bowl ads are 'not too appropriate' or 'not appropriate at all', according to a study by research firm Morning Consult.

In contrast, just 20% of respondents say political statements are 'very appropriate' or 'somewhat appropriate'.

It seems the tide is turning, as many Super Bowl ads over the past couple of years have had a political edge.

AB InBev, for example, which in 2017 launched a pro-immigration ad for Budweiser, told AdAge it will not be opting for a politically driven campaign this year.

The drinks giant has exclusive rights in the alcohol category and has secured five-minutes and 30-seconds of ad time for five of its brands, a rise on its usual three-minutes and 30-seconds, equating to at least £30m in ad spend.

Broadcaster CBS is also cracking down on companies looking to push a political agenda. Acreage Holdings, one of the biggest cannabis companies in the world, had its ad banned by the TV rights holder.

Acreage Holdings' spot intended to tell the story of a veteran dealing with combat injuries and a child who suffers from seizures but the ad was deemed to be a "call to political action" rather than a promotion for the company.

So despite the legalisation of weed in a number of US states, the Super Bowl LIII will remain well and truly weed free.

The debutantes and comeback kids

First-timers Olay and Bumble are not alone as Superbowl debutantes. Joining the pair are Kraft Heinz brand Devour, AB InBev's Bon & Viv Spiked Seltzer and Pepsi's Bubly.

Frozen food brand Devour will make its Super Bowl debut during the third quarter, while snack brand Planters, which is also owned by Kraft Heinz, will return after an 11 year hiatus to air a second-quarter spot starring Mr Peanut alongside baseball legend Alex Rodriguez.

Meanwhile, Pepsi has enlisted Michael Bublé for its Bubly commercial. In the humour-driven ad, the Grammy-winning singer is convinced 'Bubly' is misspelt and is on a mission to correct the spelling and pronunciation.

The commercial marks the first Super Bowl appearance for the sparkling water line since it launched last year and will highlight its four newest flavours: blackberry, cranberry, raspberry and peach.

Missing from this year's Super Bowl ad break line-up is Coca-Cola. For the first time in 11 years the drinks giant will not make a commercial appearance during the event, instead running an advert before kick-off on CBS.

The 60-second animated spot, which channels Andy Warhol, will go live before the national anthem and intends to promote unity.

Burger King, another Super Bowl veteran, will air its first advert since 2006 which will feature the Whopper and run in the fourth quarter.

It remains to be seen who the big advertising winners and losers will be at this year's Super Bowl, but either way it will definitely spark some talking points on Sunday evening.

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