

COMMENT

Shoppable ads and promotions show how boundaries are being blurred, says **Simon Hathaway**

How the Super Bowl turns views into buyers



Simon Hathaway is president and global head of retail experience, Cheil

As well as being the first major US sporting event of the year, the Super Bowl is a red letter day in the US retail calendar and is estimated to be worth \$14.3bn (£9.4bn).

It's a big day for advertising too – arguably the biggest in the world.

Last year's ad spend topped \$330m (£216m). That's just over a dollar for every US citizen.

But what relevance does it have for UK retailers? American football may be a minority interest here but the issues the Super Bowl exposes are pertinent this side of the pond.

As retailers know, turning viewers into buyers is a challenge.

Last year H&M tried to close the gap by airing the first 'shoppable' TV commercial using Delivery Agent's ShopTV platform to sell David Beckham's underwear range.

This year Katy Perry's half-time show was shoppable. Viewers were able to purchase exclusive products promoted by Universal Music and half-time show sponsor Pepsi. Meanwhile, Twitter's 'buy now' button enabled tweets to be shopped using Visa Checkout.

It is further proof that the traditional boundaries of brand communications and retail are becoming blurred.

Retailers, especially fashion retailers such as Asos, are already pointing the way to a future when everything that can be shoppable will be shoppable.

That will create a new dimension to what it means to be truly omnichannel.

But the battle for the Super Bowl dollar does not take place on TV – it is won or lost on the shopfloor.

The elaborate Super Bowl-themed displays and promotions in US big-box grocers dwarf anything you would see in a UK store.

While viewers see Super Bowl advertising as part of the entertainment, for retailers ad spend and money spent on property rights are all wrapped up in supplier negotiation for off-shelf display.

AB Inbev, which owns Budweiser, set up 150,000 displays in advance of the event, supported by ad spend and sponsorship of the NFL.

That will be very familiar to retailers and brand owners in the UK, where we are also seeing money from traditional advertising budgets move to digital media and shopper marketing.

Increasingly that shopper marketing spend is digital, reflecting changing shopping habits. Consumers are as likely to find inspiration through Pinterest as through traditional media.

Many retailers understand this and are changing how they approach creative work. For example, Walmart claims to vet every creative idea on how well it will play out in social media.

The relationship between retailers and brand owners is constantly evolving and has always been a negotiation, but the news last week that Tesco is to face investigation for breach of the Groceries Supply Code of Practice highlights how tense that has become.

As we see changes in shopping behaviour brought about by the rise of shoppable media and consumer empowerment through mobile technology, a genuine shift to partnership between brands and retailers will be required.

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