

The Super Bowl's Intended Receivers

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Denise Lee Yohn has been inspiring and teaching companies how to operationalize their brands to grow their businesses for over 20 years. World-class brands including Sony, Frito-Lay, Burger King, and Nautica have called on Denise, an established speaker, author, and consulting partner.

Super Bowl advertisers could learn a thing or two from [Eli Manning](#).

The Giants' quarterback threw some crisp, clean passes in Sunday's Super Bowl because he was crystal clear about **who the intended receiver was**. Moreover he used his **insights** about the receiver – how fast he could run, how well he could outmaneuver the defense players, how he might change his path – in order to throw the ball exactly how and where it needed to be thrown.



I'll end the analogy there before you mistake me for an Eli Manning fan (I am a San Diegan after all). My point is that some Super Bowl advertisers seemed clueless or at least very confused about who their intended receivers – i.e., target consumers – were. Or their approach to reaching that target seemed to lack any insight about how they'd receive the advertising message.

Now some advertisers did get it right:

- [Chevrolet's 2012 apocalypse ad](#) spoke squarely to the tough guys (or wanna-be's) who are looking for a truck that will survive anything.
- [GE's spots](#) about making the power that makes the beer and about employing construction workers were positive appeals to employees, corporate buyers, and influencers.
- And [Teleflora](#) knocked it out of the park with Adriana Lima's not so subtle message to guys who want to get lucky this Valentine's Day – in fact, the lack of subtlety made it clear exactly the kind of guy the ad intended to appeal to – brilliant!

But others missed their intended receivers. Here are the four spots that I think we can learn the most from:

- [Careerbuilder.com](#) – The “I work with a bunch of monkeys” shtick worked well 6 years ago when the employment website ran its first ad in the campaign. Back then the unemployment rate was at a record low of 4.6% and the ad resonated with the mass of folks who believed there were better pastures to pursue.

But, now we have millions of people who are unemployed or underemployed – why didn't Careerbuilder.com reach out with a message targeted to them?

Or at least change its message to appeal to the mindset of those who are blessed enough to have jobs now. These folks may be just as dissatisfied as those from years past – probably more – but it's unlikely they haven't thought about leaving their jobs. It's more likely that they feel stuck – unsure of whether there are better options in this economy. A message that leveraged this insight would have resonated more strongly.

- H&M – I certainly enjoyed seeing David Beckham in his new line of skivvies for the retailer, but my male companions? Not so much. Close up shots of male body parts don't interest most men – in fact, they find them they're offensive. And yet, men were the target of the ad, no?

Now, one could argue that the ad was intended to appeal to females who would buy the new line of underwear for their male significant others. But how many women buy underwear for men? And how many men wear underwear bought for them if they have negative associations with it? Trying to, er, measure up to Beckham would certainly create some cognitive dissonance.

H&M could have appealed to its male target and still leveraged Beckham and his near nakedness by showing sexy women fawning over him.

- Audi – I can imagine the agency pitch behind the car company's vampire ad: Vampires are cool among the "younger demographic" → we want to appeal to the "younger demographic" → let's do an ad with vampires.

The spot is so well-executed, I might have fallen for the pitch if I had been there. But only in the light of day, pardon the pun, does the problem with the approach become apparent:

What do young, upwardly mobile people want from a car? Cool technology? Yes. Sleek design? Yes. Brand status? Yes. Superior performance? Yes. LED headlights? Uh, maybe?

LED headlights ended up being the main proposition of the spot, and so the ad really undersold the car to the brand's new target audience. It almost seemed patronizing to focus on the feature, as if to suggest that's all young people would care about. Instead of force fitting the product into the advertising idea, why not figure out what makes the brand appealing to the target first, and then create a spot around that insight?

- Best Buy – The electronics chain's commercial was almost on-target – but almost only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades, right?! Featuring the inventors behind the cool things we can do with our mobile phones was a creative, attention-getting approach – but it could have been so much more inspiring to Best Buy's target audience if they had shone the spotlight on some female inventors.

With statistics showing that women comprise well over half of their customers, Best Buy has publicly declared its desire to appeal to females. It's redesigned its stores, introduced personal assistants, and trained its staff to interact with female customers more appropriately. Even its mall-based stores, Best Buy Mobile, reflect the company's intent to broaden its base by reaching women and teenage girls who don't typically shop at big-box locations.

And yet, it runs an ad on the nation's biggest stage that features only the accomplishments of men? Of course, these great men inspire both genders but it seems the company missed an opportunity to more directly hit its target.

To the uninitiated, I realize my comments might seem like I'm splitting hairs or expecting too much of ads in a venue whose primary purpose is to get attention and entertain. But smart advertisers know what Eli Manning knows – the Super Bowl isn't just a game. It's the ultimate test of **skill**, **discipline**, and **strategy**. And the only way to win is to hit the intended receiver, make the connections, and score.