

Lorraine Kessler: Will advertisers ‘show me the new’ in Super Bowl LII

By [Lorraine Kessler Special](#) to The Canton Repository

Posted at 5:59 AM

This year’s Super Bowl TV commercials might be the year of the familiar — familiar advertisers, familiar celebrities, familiar teasers, familiar promotional stunts and humor.

Familiar is not all bad. Research shows most people prefer ideas they already understand, stories that are easy to relate to and puzzles that are easy to solve.

But people also need a little of the opposite. They want to be surprised, challenged, forced to think — even shocked — if only just a bit.

Turns out, the mix of something new with a touch of the familiar is what creates the great “aha!” Those of us who watch the commercials more than the game expect an ad to “show me the new.” To be predictable is to be ignored.

The offering of already released spots seem tipped in favor of the familiar. Perhaps this is a reflection of the times. [Advertising](#) is a cultural-commercial business after all. Familiar is reassuring. New is unsettling. When times are tumultuous, the tendency is to be conservative, to reassure rather than disrupt.

Take stock yourself. Here are a few familiar ads you can check out before Sunday’s big stage is open for business:

- Keanu Reeves is featured in a Squarespace ad trying to get his motorcycle business going. The theme and humorous tone are replays of last year’s ad featuring John Malkovich trying to get JohnMalkovich.com back.
- Matt Damon stumps for Stella Artois. It’s an ad that gets you to drink more beer to help Water.org provide a year of clean water to someone in the developing world. Damon co-founded Water.org in 2015.
- Hip-hop stars Busta Rhymes and Missy Elliott pair with Peter Dinklage and Morgan Freeman to promote the pairing of two PepsiCo innovations: Doritos Blaze and Mountain Dew Ice.

- David Schwimmer, best known for his role on “Friends,” makes his first TV commercial appearance in 23 years for Skittles. A familiar game-day advertiser, Skittles is known for the oddball. The 15-second pregame teaser ads lead up to a single game-day spot only one fan will see, teenager Marcos Menendez of Los Angeles. Certainly a new twist. Time will tell how it plays out.
- Super Bowl mainstay Bud Light will conclude the narrative arc of its very entertaining “Dilly Dilly” series of ads on game day. Don’t let the entertainment value fool you. These ads pack a positioning punch. Bud Light is the crowd-pleasing, affordable “party beer” worth fighting for.
- Avocados from Mexico returns for the fourth consecutive year with a familiar, humorous ad showing how avocados contribute to fun, health and wellness. This year’s entry features comedian Chris Elliott. Super Bowl exposure pays off for the Avocados from Mexico brand: Sales jumped 35 percent after the brand’s game-day debut in 2014, and share for the U.S. avocado market has grown to nearly 80 percent.
- Stella Artois is not the only beer with a cause-related kicker this year. Natural Light is offering cash-strapped college students some debt relief. The economy brand will run a Super Bowl spot in 10 markets to promote its \$1 million student-loan giveaway. It’s a stunt for sure, but one that is highly relevant to the target.

There is no doubt the Super Bowl broadcast is a springboard for creative when it comes to delivering a brand message to the masses. That is why we see so many repeat advertisers with a large total customer market.

In the words of the late, great sportswriter Frank Deford, “It’s always more people watching, more dollars paid, more of everything. ‘Less is more’ it is not.”

What advertiser(s) will score the “aha!” moment with the right mix of familiar and new this Super Bowl? Stay tuned for our thumbs up and thumbs down picks next week.

Lorraine Kessler is principal and strategist of [Innis Maggiore](#), founded in Canton in 1974 and today the nation’s leading positioning ad agency, building strong brands for companies in competitive markets here and across the country.