

Super Bowl, Super Product?

Posted on Feb 07, 2012, Posted by [Kelly Burroughs](#) Category [Product Management](#)

Hut 1, Hut 2, Hut 3!

If you were one of the 111.31 million people who tuned into the Super Bowl this year, then congratulations! You helped make it the most-watched television program for the third year in a row.

And not only that, but you were also witness to what I'd consider probably the most awkward winning touchdown in the history of the Super Bowl – not that I've seen every one, but it would be hard to beat an “oh shoot I don't really want to score this and take the lead yet” butt-flop into the end zone.

But before that awkward touchdown, as I sat watching the game (and eating copious amounts of nachos and onion rings), I started to ask myself – can this really be considered just a game anymore?. Being in product management I tend to always think of things in terms of products, and when I stop and think about the Super Bowl, I can't help but think that the Super Bowl must be one of the most successful products in history.

So then I started to look at some of the things I think contribute towards the success of any great product and came up with this list as a place to start:

- Innovation.

- Ability to solve a market problem.
- Enabler of other successful products.
- Brand recognition.
- Revenue generation.
- Market loyalty.
- A national holiday named after it.

And then I started to look at how the Super Bowl fit into each of these categories, and here is what I've come up with:

- **Innovation**

Over the last 44 years, the Super Bowl has continued to innovate the way in which it delivers its product – here are just a few examples of how:

The Half-Time Show. From a show which has evolved from high-school marching bands and a dancing Shirlee Bertolini in a donkey costume, to a show starring the biggest names in the music industry putting on a show usually reserved for the biggest and priciest venues in the world.

Commercials. From commercials which have evolved from a 1970's Noxzema ad starring

Farah Fawcett creaming Joe Namath's face, to the game-changing Ridley Scott-directed commercial by Apple for the MacIntosh, to this year's 2-minute long advertisement run by Chrysler starring Clint Eastwood. Advertisers have continuously innovated over the years to push the envelope and try to gain a competitive advantage over the other advertisements being aired.

Social Media. A first of its kind, the implementation of a "social media command centre" is evidence of how the Super Bowl continues to listen to the problems of the market and come up with innovative solutions.

- **Ability to solve a market problem**

Considering the problem to solve is 'how to deliver the most anticipated sporting event of the year in a way which delights the target market', I would say the NFL does a pretty good job of delivering that solution using a variety of features. The fact that the number of viewers who tune into the Super Bowl every year only goes up is evidence of that. I imagine any product that continuously develops and delivers an output which attracts more people each year is considered quite successful.

- **Enabler of other successful products**

Similar to how the iPad/iPhone has been a platform for many apps to succeed from, the Super Bowl has been a platform for numerous products and services to succeed from. Think about the money generated by the Super Bowl within the service industry, food and beverage industry (Super Bowl is the second highest day of food consumption in the U.S.), merchandise industry, advertising industry, Walt Disney, and even the players themselves who can walk away with millions of dollars in endorsement deals.

- **Brand Recognition**

Despite the number of advertisements for the Super Bowl, did you know that any establishment or company who uses either the word 'Super Bowl' and 'Super Sunday' within their marketing

efforts, run the risk of being sued by the NFL? That is because both of these terms are trademarked terms which the NFL is adamant about protecting. Simply being associated with the Super Bowl brand itself will increase the sales for a company, which is why the NFL only has a few high-paying marketing partners who are permitted to use the Super Bowl logo and terms 'Super Bowl' or 'Super Sunday'. And to think the 'Super Bowl' name was really only ever supposed to be temporary, jokingly termed so by Lamar Hunt owner of the Kansas City Chiefs after his kids 'Super Ball' toy.

- **Market Loyalty**

Those who love the Super Bowl really love the Super Bowl and will watch with the same enthusiasm and loyalty every year regardless of which teams are playing. In fact, there are people who do not even watch football during the regular season, but are devoted to this one game every single year. The relationship the Super Bowl has with its market is one of the strongest out there. People are truly passionate about the Super Bowl, which generates support, which generates into a lot of revenue and loyalty.

- **Revenue generation**

This year's revenue projections include \$72 million in ticket and concessions revenue and \$220 million in advertising revenue for host NBC. This doesn't even include the revenue generated by the hotel and tourism industry, the service industry, food and beverage industry, and the list goes on...

- **A national holiday created for it**

Everyone knows that all great products have a national holiday named after them, right?

Okay, maybe not – but the fact that Super Bowl Sunday is effectually considered a national holiday in the U.S should not go unrecognized, so I am including it in the list. I mean, what other product really has this? And people taking days off work to line up at the Mac store for the newest iPhone does not count...

So, what do you think? Is the Super Bowl one of the most successful products of our time? And if not, do you at least agree that was one of the most awkward winning touch-downs in history?

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