



Recession won't sack colas' Super Bowl ads

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The Super Bowl comes this year against the backdrop of a recession, but the nation's biggest advertising platform could be as important as ever for Coca-Cola Co. and PepsiCo...

Last year's Super Bowl broadcast attracted an average of 97.5 million viewers, according to Nielsen Company. A Super Bowl 30-second ad cost \$2.7 million, up 26 percent from 2003, according to New York-based TNS Media Intelligence. NBC is reportedly charging \$3 million this year.

While some big names, such as General Motors and FedEx, have pulled out, demand remains strong this year for Super Bowl ads, said TNS Media CEO Dean DeBiase. Newcomers, including no-frills restaurant chain Denny's, are filling the void.

Alternative outlets, such as digital media, are efficient at targeting specific consumers, but the Super Bowl remains a force for getting a message to the masses, DeBiase said.

"The Super Bowl is a powerful reminder that television is still the best medium for reaching that size of an audience," he said. "It's clearly a tremendous opportunity for the right advertisers."

PepsiCo historically has put a greater emphasis on the Super Bowl than Coca-Cola. In addition to its beverage line, the company owns Frito-Lay, which will use the Super Bowl again this year to promote Doritos. PepsiCo ranked behind only Anheuser-Busch in spending on Super Bowl advertisement, according to TNS. Coca-Cola ranked No. 8.

Coke has provided details on three of its ads for this year's Super Bowl. In an ad called "Avatar," a young man and woman come unplugged from the digital world by ordering a Coca-Cola. In an ad called "Heist," insects band together to steal a bottle of Coke from a man on a picnic.

TNS will be tracking the immediate consumer reaction to Super Bowl commercials, but the initial feedback is just one measure, DeBiase said. Smart companies will use the ads as part of a broader campaign, he said.

"Marketers need to approach their investment in the Super Bowl not as a 30- or 60-second moment in time, but as a springboard for new and effective ways to engage the consumer," DeBiase said. "Their Super Bowl spot should be a beginning, not just a platform to address a national audience."