



## ATLAS LAB

COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM  
AND COMMUNICATIONS  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

# 2025 BRAND BOWL

WHERE ADS AIM TO SCORE BIG

## WHITE PAPER

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## What is the Brand Bowl?

Started in 2019 by [Department of Advertising](#) faculty member [Dan Windels](#), the Brand Bowl is an annual analysis of the best and worst performing ads from the Super Bowl, run by students, for students at the [UF College of Journalism and Communications](#). During the game's commercial breaks, students and participants engage in live research surveys designed to evaluate the effectiveness of each advertisement. Using social media listening technology in the [UF Atlas Lab](#), students are able to delve deeper into the analytics and social media activity for each advertisement.

## What is the Atlas Lab?

The UF Atlas Lab is a state-of-the-art social media listening lab that analyzes digital media dynamics, behaviors and conversations. It primarily utilizes [Talkwalker](#), a social listening and analytics platform that helps businesses monitor online conversations, track brand mentions, and analyze customer sentiment across social media, news sites, blogs and other digital channels. Using AI-driven data collection and analysis tools, the Atlas Lab provides insights on brand reputation, industry trends and competitor activity. Some of its analytics capabilities are:

- **Real-Time Social Listening:** Instantly tracking brand mentions, industry trends, and emerging topics across social media, news, blogs and forums.
- **Sentiment Analysis:** Understanding the public perception of a brand, campaign or topic by analyzing positive, negative and neutral sentiments in conversations.
- **Trend and Hashtag Tracking:** Identifying trending topics, hashtags and keywords related to your industry or brand to stay ahead of market movements.
- **Competitive Benchmarking:** Comparing one brand's online presence against competitors to understand share of voice, engagement and brand perception.
- **Demographic and Geographic Insights:** Gaining insights into audience demographics, including age, gender and location, to better tailor marketing strategies.
- **Visual Recognition:** Tracking brand logos and images in user-generated content, even when your brand isn't mentioned in text.
- **Engagement Metrics:** Measuring likes, shares and comments across social platforms to evaluate campaign performance and audience interactions.
- **Crisis Detection:** Getting instant alerts on potential PR crises by detecting sudden spikes in negative mentions or engagement.

# METHODOLOGY

## ***Focus Groups***

Ratings were completed through a focus group consisting of 40 University of Florida students to reflect the general Gen Z audience. Ads were scored in real time as they appeared during commercial breaks. Focus group participants were given a code for each ad which they entered into a survey system along with their ranking on a 10 point scale.

## ***Social Listening Strategy***

After identifying the top 5 highest and lowest rated advertisements among the focus group, the researchers used Talkwalker to examine overall volume, engagement, reach and sentiment and identify social conversations. **Volume** indicates the total number of posts within a given period of time. **Engagements** are the visible interactions on a post, such as likes, reposts, or comments. **Reach** is an estimate of the potential number of times people may have seen the topic. **Sentiment** is an approximation of how people might feel about a topic, categorized by positive and negative emotions.

## TOP 5 ADS

### **1. PFIZER - “KNOCK OUT CANCER”**

**SCORE: 8.74 / 10**

- Pfizer started the Super Bowl off with an emotional bang with their ad for “Knock Out,” telling the inspirational story of a little boy who has just beaten cancer. Dressed as a boxer and with the city cheering him on, he runs down his street in victory and into the arms of his mom.
- The Pfizer “Knock Out” advertisement had a total of 25.3K results and 119.9K engagements across the social web. Surprisingly, approximately 68.2% of the posts were scored as having negative sentiment, with only 8.3% being positive. Potential reach was 441.4M. Most of the negative posts came from political influencers or political organizations that were attacking Pfizer’s vaccines, a major disconnect from the positive reaction of the Gen Z focus group.

## 2. NFL - “I AM SOMEBODY”

**SCORE: 8.42 / 10**

- NFL stars Demario Davis, Arik Armstead and Adam Thielen partner with the league to highlight the NFL’s programs impacting children’s futures. The ad centers around the uplifting saying “I Am Somebody” and finishes it off with “It Takes All Of Us,” highlighting the impact of confidence and community in the shaping of kids' lives.
- The NFL spot had 1K results and 1.3K engagements from across the social web. The ad had 37.2% positive engagement, 25.1% negative engagements and a potential reach of 91.7M. The term “I am somebody” became split on socials as a way to either highlight its heartwarming nature or as a joke that reinforces the importance of confidence.

## 3. NIKE - “SO WIN”

**SCORE: 8.4 / 10**

- Nike’s “So Win” calls on women athletes to embrace confidence and celebrate the power of sport. Voiced by Doechii, the ad features Sha'Carri Richardson, A'ja Wilson, Jordan Chiles, Sophia Smith, and Caitlin Clark, among others. With their new mantra being “So win, whatever it takes,” Nike calls on women to lead despite being told who they can't be.
- The ad had a total of 44.7K results and 299.8K engagements from across the social web. Approximately 47.1% of the posts were scored as having positive sentiment and 10.4% were negative. Despite any negativity, Nike made waves at the Super Bowl as the potential reach of the advertisement was 602.9M, with a majority praising Nike for continuing to uplift and support women athletes.

## 4. HOMES.COM - “NOT SAYING WE'RE THE BEST”

**SCORE: 8.38 / 10**

- Homes.com’s comedic ad features Morgan Freeman, *Schitt's Creek's* Daniel Levy and *SNL's* Heidi Gardner trying to find loopholes to legally say “Homes.com is the best” in a commercial.
- The ad saw a total of 1.1K results and 1.7K overall engagement. The sentiment was 29% positive, with the majority of the comments being about Morgan Freeman’s cameo in the spot and 29.7% negative, mostly discussing how Morgan Freeman was too good to be featured. Homes.com’s ads had an overall potential reach of 286 million.

## 5. MICHELOB ULTRA - “THE ULTRA HUSTLE”

**SCORE: 8.38 / 10**

- Michelob Ultra’s “The Ultra Hustle” ad features Willem Dafoe and Catherine O’Hara as “pickleball hustlers,” effortlessly outplaying celebrity athletes and real pickleball pros. With their win, they claim a cooler of Michelob Ultra.
- The ad generated 3.9K engagements, with sentiment skewing overwhelmingly positive (54%) compared to only 6.7% negative. The primary drivers of positive sentiment included the ad’s humor, casting choices and its incorporation of pickleball. The engagement pattern indicates a strong spike in interest around the ad’s release.

## BOTTOM 5 ADS

### 1. M3GAN 2.0 - “OFFICIAL TEASER”

**SCORE: 4.02 / 10**

- M3gan 2.0 was teased with the killer doll dancing to Chappell Roan’s “Femininomenon” before very creepily asking “Did you miss me?” and winking at the audience.
- The commercial had 1.2K results and 16.5K engagements. The ad saw 13.1% positive engagements, 15.5 % negative engagements and a potential reach of 205.6M. The commercial discourse focused on speculation of whether it was computer generated and its unexpected placement between sentimental ads.

### 2. FANDUEL - “KICK OF DESTINY - ELI’S PARADE”

**SCORE: 3.94**

- The FanDuel ad features Peyton and Eli Manning participating in the FanDuel “Kick of Destiny” competition, with Eli winning. Eli’s victory resulted in him riding on a foot-shaped parade float being pulled by his brother.
- The FanDuel ad did not gain enough attention to have a notable spike. There were a total of 2.4K results, with 14.9K engagements. Roughly 4.2% of the posts were scored as having negative sentiment, with 3.5% being positive, showing that it did not generate much of an emotional reaction. The potential reach was 430.1M.

### 3. TUBI - “COWBOY HEAD”

**SCORE: 3.52 / 10**

- Tubi’s “Cowboy Head” Super Bowl ad, part of their “If it’s in you, it’s in here” campaign, features a character with a fleshy cowboy hat-shaped head, symbolizing the Western film genre.
- The Tubi ad generated a total of 956 results and 3.4K engagements. The sentiment was mostly negative at 63.6% and hardly positive (5.5%), with most comments addressing the disturbing nature of a fleshy cowboy hat. The overall potential reach was 145.8M.

### 4. COFFEE-MATE - “COLD FOAM”

**SCORE: 3.48 / 10**

- Coffee-Mate’s first-ever Super Bowl ad featured their cold foam product line and a dancing tongue voiced by Shania Twain. The hypnotizing ad caused an uproar across social media platforms, with some viewers even going as far as to question how the spot left the drawing board.
- When extracting the performance results of the ad, there were a total of 6.7K engagements, with the discussion of the ad being mostly negative. Approximately 5.5% of the sentiments were positive, 35.1% were neutral, and 59.4% were negative. With a potential reach of 454M, Coffee-Mate made a lasting impact at the 2025 Super Bowl, despite criticisms of its weirdness.

### 5. TUBI - “Z-SUITE”

**SCORE: 3.48 / 10**

- Tubi attempted to give the Superbowl a Gen-Z kick with its rogue TikTok-style promo for the workplace comedy “The Z-Suite.” The ad features Lauren Graham from Gilmore Girls, who will star in the new workplace program and Tubi’s first scripted comedy.
- Tubi’s Z-Suite ad generated 114 results and only 41 engagements. The ad’s brevity and confusing format could have caused it to be overlooked by viewers. The engagement it did generate has 50% negative sentiment with viewers expressing confusion over the content of the ad. The vertical video attempted to appeal to a Gen Z audience, but missed the mark due to its clichés.

# KEY INSIGHTS

## 1. Shocking, edgy, and disturbing ads didn't earn high marks from our Gen Z focus group.

Edgy and weird ads may have worked in previous years, but this year's focus group was turned off by body horror and over-the-top AI or CGI featuring strange heads, human-animal mashups, and animated tongues.

## 2. The highest-rated ads generated strong, positive emotions in our focus group.

Pfizer, Nike, and the NFL connected with our Gen Z audience through narratives that emphasized overcoming difficulty, fostering group solidarity, and celebrating individual growth.

## 3. Celebrities do not always guarantee a favorable connection.

Our Gen Z audience connected strongly with ads featuring Dan Levy, Heidi Gardner, Catherine O'Hara and Willem Dafoe. Others, including Ben and Casey Affleck, Bill Belichick, Lauren Graham, and Eli and Peyton Manning, failed to connect with this year's group.

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

Live focus groups and social media listening research can be crucial tools for advertisers looking to understand consumer reactions in real time, especially during major events like the Super Bowl, where ads generate massive engagement and discussion. By analyzing sentiment, share of voice, and audience reactions, brands can assess which advertisements resonate and which miss the mark. These insights not only help advertisers refine future campaigns but also provide a deeper understanding of evolving consumer preferences. As digital conversations continue to shape brand perception, advertisers today—and in the future—should leverage multiple methods of research to help them craft impactful, culturally relevant, and data-driven advertising strategies.