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Lessons Learned, H&M Returns to Super Bowl With New Beckham Spot

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Advertising

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THE Seattle Seahawks are not the only ones returning to the [Super Bowl](#) for a second appearance. So, too, is the retailer H&M, coming back with a commercial that seeks to build on what the company learned two years ago.

Like the spot that ran during Super Bowl XLVI in 2012, the commercial that H&M plans to run in Super Bowl XLVIII, to be broadcast by Fox on Feb. 2, will feature the soccer star [David Beckham](#). The earlier spot introduced the David Beckham Bodywear line of men's apparel at H&M, which includes briefs, boxers, tank tops and henleys. The new commercial will be for the Bodywear line, too.

In 2012, H&M was the only retailer to buy commercial time during the game, and it looks as if that will also be the case this year. And like the 2012 commercial, the 2014 ad comes from a creative unit at H&M named Red Room.

This time around, though, there will be several differences in how H&M approaches the Super Bowl, the biggest day of the year for advertising as well as football. The goals are to increase the effectiveness of the commercial and its engagement with consumers — crucial considerations given that Fox is charging in the neighborhood of \$4 million for each 30 seconds of ad time in Super Bowl XLVIII.

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Consumers can vote on the ending of the H&M ad for David Beckham Bodywear that will appear in the Super Bowl.

H&M says it was pleased with how the commercial performed two years ago because the introduction of David Beckham Bodywear was “very successful,” said Daniel Kulle, president for the H&M North America division of H&M, based in New York.

Still, the spot was not among the standouts in postgame polls. For instance, it finished 49th out of 55 ads in the 2012 edition of the annual [USA Today Super Bowl Ad Meter](#).

And several surveys released this week suggest little anticipation among consumers for another H&M commercial. For example, the 12th annual Super Bowl Engagement Survey by [Brand Keys](#), a research consultancy in New York, described H&M as among the “ad underdogs” because it was one of eight sponsors with low engagement, which includes interest, among respondents.

Also, H&M is not among the top 10 Super Bowl advertisers being talked about before the game, according to data from [Blab](#), a Seattle company that monitors social media in real time. In first place is [Doritos](#), sold by the Frito-Lay division of PepsiCo, as a result of its annual Crash the Super Bowl contest, which asks consumers to create commercials that could potentially appear in the game and vote to help determine which may run.

Borrowing a page from the Doritos playbook, the principal way that H&M's second Super Bowl appearance will differ from its first is the introduction of elements to encourage interaction. For instance, consumers are being invited to vote for one of two endings to the 30-second H&M commercial for Super Bowl XLVIII, which will be broadcast in the second quarter.

"Consumers will be part of creating what they want to see," Mr. Kulle said. The voting, on [the H&M website, hm.com](#), is scheduled to begin on Monday and run through 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Feb. 1.

Mr. Beckham is to appear at the H&M store in Times Square on Feb. 1. Fans not busy clamoring for his autograph can vote on customized iPads for their favorite ending to the spot.

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One option shows Mr. Beckham covered, the other, uncovered.

In one ending, Mr. Beckham turns up at a photo shoot in H&M briefs; those who like that version will be asked to vote to see him "#covered." In the other ending, he arrives at the photo shoot seemingly undressed; those who like that version will be asked to vote to see him "#uncovered."

Given the advertising acceptability standards at Fox and the National Football League, Mr. Beckham would not actually be starkers, as the British say. A camera angle would make it look as if he were. "I don't know how far we can lower the camera," Mr. Kulle said, laughing.

The commercial begins with Mr. Beckham racing across a cityscape to get to the photo shoot, overcoming obstacles like a lithe, tattooed version of Indiana Jones. That the spot has a plot is another difference from [the commercial](#) two years ago, which spent 30 seconds presenting Mr. Beckham posing in briefs.

In another example of adding interactivity for 2014, viewers watching the game on certain Samsung smart televisions will be able to [buy pieces](#) from the David Beckham Bodywear collection through a so-called T-commerce platform powered by Delivery Agent, an ad-technology company.

By advertising in Super Bowl XLVIII, H&M is going up against longtime sponsors that include [Anheuser-Busch](#), [Audi](#), Chevrolet, Coca-Cola, [GoDaddy](#), Hyundai and Pepsi.

The risk is worth it, Mr. Kulle said, because "we need to build brand awareness in the United States" and "increase traffic to the stores."

"One way is through our footprint," he said, by expanding in this country, where the company has 320 stores, and "one way is to be in the biggest arena, the big game, with over a hundred million people in America watching."

The Super Bowl campaign will be promoted before, during and after the game on platforms like [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) in addition to the H&M website. [Leverage Agency](#) in New York is handling marketing public relations.