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THESE BRAND PARTNERSHIPS WERE THE REAL WINNERS OF THE SUPER BOWL

UNEXPECTED BRANDS TEAMING UP SURPRISED VIEWERS AND BECAME THE REAL SUCCESS STORIES OF LAST NIGHT'S GAME...

Advertisers played a high-stakes game last night. Super Bowl LIII brought in \$382 million in advertising, [according to Ad Age](#), with spots selling [for a reported](#) average of \$5.25 million. But with all that money at play, there weren't too many stand-out commercial moments.

Last week, we [gave you a sneak peek](#) at the big trends that you would see during the big game's ad breaks, and they all held true. Nostalgia was rampant, with the Backstreet Boys, Carrie Bradshaw, and The Dude all making appearances. Artificial intelligence, in the form of smart speakers and robots, were an odd recurring theme. Celebrities were everywhere (whether they made sense appearing in the same spot or not). And in a move [some called risk-averse](#), most brands stayed away from politics, keeping things light or feel-good during an event that's become increasingly politicized.

Overall, much like the action on the field, the approach was [deemed a bit of a snooze](#). And, because so many of the ads were released in advance of the game, there weren't too many surprises—with a few notable exceptions. These brands managed to stand out from the crowd, not necessarily for being edgy, but for teaming up in unexpected ways. On a night that's usually about brand competitions, these partnerships were the real winners:

Bud Light & HBO

Bud Light surprised (and delighted) viewers with their co-branded *Game of Thrones* Super Bowl ad. In the spot, the latest installment of Bud Light's viral "Dilly Dilly" commercials, a jousting match between the Bud Knight and a rival is beginning—it all seems to be following the same script as previous ads in the campaign, when suddenly The Mountain from *Game of Thrones* slays the Bud Knight, and a dragon spits fire at everyone as the now-famous theme music plays in a sudden pivot to a promo for the upcoming final season of the show that [young viewers love to binge](#). The unexpected play of having these universes collide is proving successful: the spot [has racked up](#) 3.4 million views (and counting) on *Game of Thrones*' YouTube, and over 2.5 million on their Twitter. The Verge [called the ad](#) "peak Super Bowl 2019," and it's also [being called](#) one of the biggest advertising wins of the night—thanks to the buzz it's continuing to [earn on social](#).

T-Mobile & Taco Bell & Lyft

T-Mobile aired four spots during the big game and kept their format simple: just a stream of text messages filled the screen as viewers watched conversations unfold between pairs, including a boyfriend and girlfriend discussing dinner plans and a tech-unsavvy father and his problem-solving daughter. But though the format wasn't flashy, the spots managed to grab plenty of attention. For one thing, the chats being featured borrowed from some already popular viral threads (and yes, the brand [paid for permission to use them](#)). But they also teamed up with two other brands to offer users some alluring free giveaways. In "[Kristy](#)," which currently has 2.7 million YouTube views, the aforementioned boyfriend and girlfriend chat about dinner while the boyfriend deletes potential messages that make it clear he really wants tacos (she wants sushi). The conclusion reveals that the T-Mobile Tuesdays app will be giving

users free Taco Bell tacos every week. While [some backlash](#) about the ad has been brewing, reactions to the ad on YouTube are overwhelmingly positive. "[We're Here For You](#)," which currently has over 2.3 million views, features an embarrassing misunderstanding between a man and his car driver, and offers users free Lyft rides. There are many reasons these spots are being talked about, but the partnerships (and free stuff) helped the brand to stand out from the crowd on a crowded night of advertising.

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