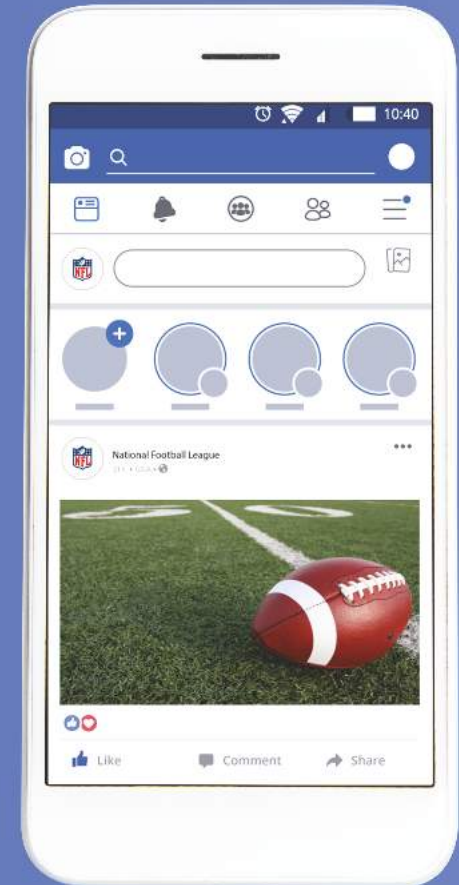




# ADS ANALYSIS NFL 2020 SPONSORS



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# Introduction

135

**Brands &  
Sponsors  
Analysed**

While Kansas City Chiefs' fans were still in the hangover of their team's win over the San Francisco 49ers (on February 3, 2020), the first cases of COVID-19 started appearing all around the USA. In the beginning, everyone thought it would get back to normal in a few months. But as time progressed football fans were left wondering if 2020 will be a blank page in NFL's history.

Despite all the odds, the 101st season of the NFL did happen (obviously, with some changes) and was (almost) a smooth sail.

The NFL is not only the highest-grossing sports league in the world but also a monolithic marketing opportunity for brands. But with uncertainty looming, the prospect of empty stadiums, and the cost of buying a 30-seconds slot, put brands on the defensive. In fact, Budweiser, Little Caesars and Avocado decided to skip in-stadium advertising altogether this year.

The lack of in-stadium ad opportunities and dropping TV ratings was a turn-off. And despite all of this, many brands scored a touchdown. There were creative ideas (as always),

great ads, jaw-dropping offers, and ingenious methods to capture the frenzy during America's biggest sporting event. In this particular report, we monitored the Facebook Ads of all the 135 NFL sponsors and advertisers.

## Objective Of The Report

The report is qualitative in nature where we assessed the Facebook Ads of all the NFL event sponsors. We wanted to assess it on the basis of best practices and guidelines.

- 🏈 To understand how NFL sponsors leveraged Facebook Ads along with TV and OTT channels
- 🏈 To monitor the consistency of marketing messages across multiple ad platforms
- 🏈 To understand the sponsors' marketing communication strategy during NFL

## Evaluation Methodology

Our team tracked the Facebook Ads of 135 NFL sponsors. At the same time, we also tracked these brands' campaigns on other social media platforms, OTT platforms, and TV to see if their messaging was consistent through all the advertising channels.

## Evaluation Criteria

We evaluated the brands on the following three key aspects of Facebook Ads

- 🏈 Campaign creativity and ad message
- 🏈 Ad efficacy
- 🏈 Landing page and tracking setup



## Brands Analysed



Mercedes-Benz



+120  
MORE

## Key Insights

- 🏈 Out of 135 brands, 83 brands were running Facebook Ads during the event.
- 🏈 Facebook Ads remained the ignored advertising area for NFL 2020 with only 4 brands using NFL or football themed campaigns. Major brands including American Airlines, Mercedes-Benz, Coca Cola, P&G and even Nike did not have any campaigns around football or NFL on Facebook Ads.
- 🏈 Only 17 brands had NFL related branding in their ads.
- 🏈 Single image ads were the most popular ad format used by the advertisers
  - Brands that used single image ads: 71
  - Brands that used carousel ads: 24
  - Brands that used slideshow ads: 14
  - Brands that used video ads: 50
- 🏈 13 brands did not have Facebook Pixel on their landing pages.



# Campaign Creativity and Ad Message

The aim of this evaluation was to see if the advertisers have designed any special campaign around the NFL or Football in general to tap into the popularity of NFL wave flooding the country.

We evaluated the campaign creativity and ad messaging of the brands based on the following criteria.

- 🏈 How brands tied their Facebook Ads messages with football or NFL to leverage their sponsorship during the event.
- 🏈 How the message in Facebook Ads was similar or different from the other platforms (both organic and paid) and if messages were indeed consistent.



## Key Takeaways

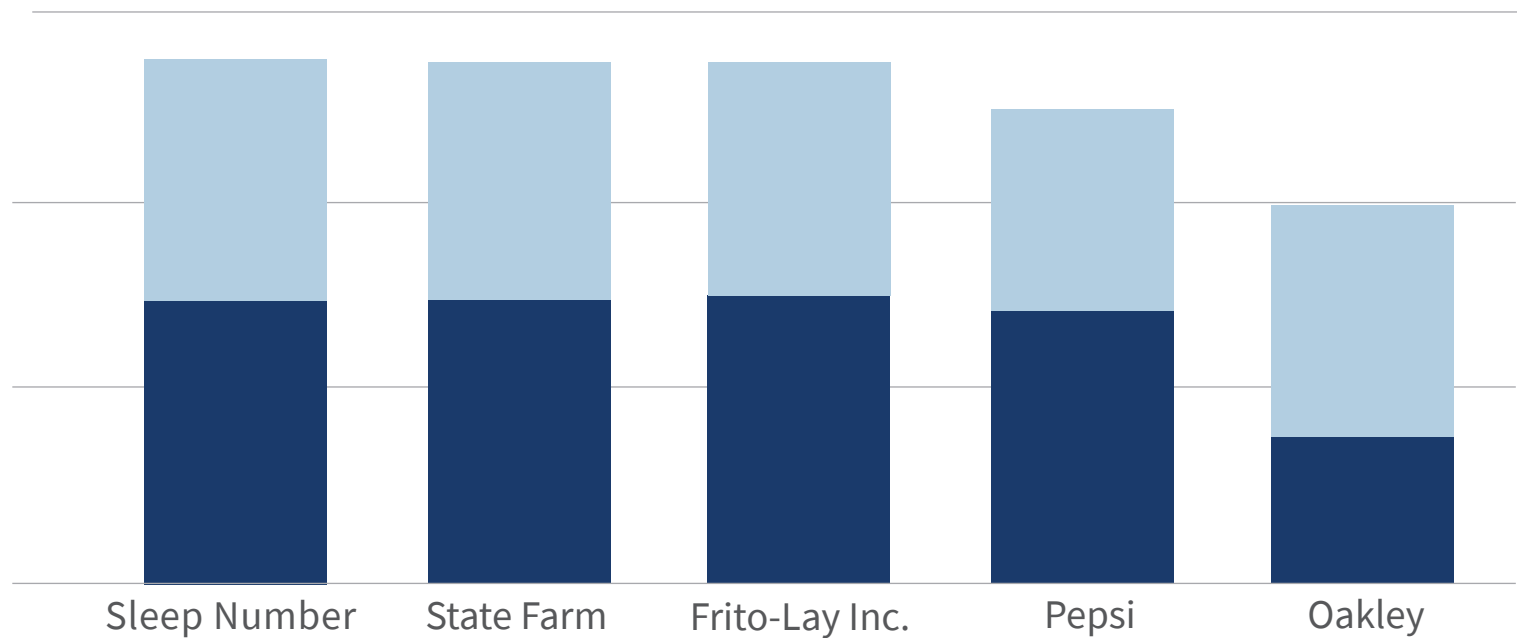
- 🏈 Out of 135 brands analysed just 4 brands had designed campaigns around the NFL.
- 🏈 Campaigns from 8 advertisers were multi-channel campaigns, i.e. the same advertising message was running on either TV or OTT platforms and organic social media channels.

# Touchdown

## Points Scored

■ Campaign used on Facebook is used on other advertising channels

■ NFL of Football centric campaign used for Facebook ads





## Sleep Number

Sleep number's campaign *The Comeback* featuring legendary Vikings player John Randle helped them hit the touchdown. The much talked about comic ads depicted how Sleep Number's 360 Smart Bed has helped the legend to sleep better and motivated him to start preparing for a comeback.



## State Farm

State Farm's #teamstatefarm was popular across all its channels (paid as well as organic). Jake, a widely popular face from earlier campaigns can be seen in these ads. In addition to #teamstatefarm ads, State Farm used their popular steakhouse ad (featuring Patrick Mahomes and Aaron Rodgers) and barber shop ad (featuring Patrick Mahomes) to get the attention of their targeted audience.



## Frito-Lay Inc.

After the huge success of their campaign “’Twas the Night Before Kickoff”, Frito-Lay Inc. came up with a sequel campaign “*Twas the Night Before Super Bowl*”.

The ads for this campaign featured celebrated NFL stars Peyton Manning, Eli Manning, Archie Manning, Troy Aikman, Joe Montana, and Marshawn Lynch. By re-creation of the iconic holiday poem “’Twas the Night Before Christmas”, the campaign tried to show the excitement that surrounds the biggest game of the year.



## Pepsi

Saying that the Super Bowl Halftime Show is as popular as the main game is not wrong, after all it features some of the most influential pop stars. This year Pepsi was sponsoring The Super Bowl Halftime Show for the tenth time in a row and they widely promoted it through their Facebook Ads. The campaign encouraged people to scan a code on Pepsi cans to unlock the exclusive halftime content.



## Oakley

Oakley, an official on-field partner and licensee of the NFL launched its popular For the love of sport campaign in the second half of 2020, with hopes “to inspire hope and positivity during a time of uncertainty by celebrating sport and...[to] enlighten and uplift”.

During the NFL, they celebrated the spirit of the NFL by using the same hashtag to promote Patrick Mahomes Signature Series Sutro Lite collection



## Hail Mary

97% of the sponsors we analysed did not have any specific campaigns planned around NFL or football. This includes some of the biggest brands like Nike, Ford, Bose, Huyndai, Wells Fargo, Motorola and Lyft.

# Ad Efficacy

For this evaluation criteria, we focused on checking how well the ads were connected to the NFL and if the elements of the NFL were used in the ads. We evaluated the ad efficacy of the brands based on the following criteria:

- 🏈 NFL or Football related branding in ads
- 🏈 Clear CTA in the ads
- 🏈 Types of ads used: image, carousel, video, and gifs (or slideshows)

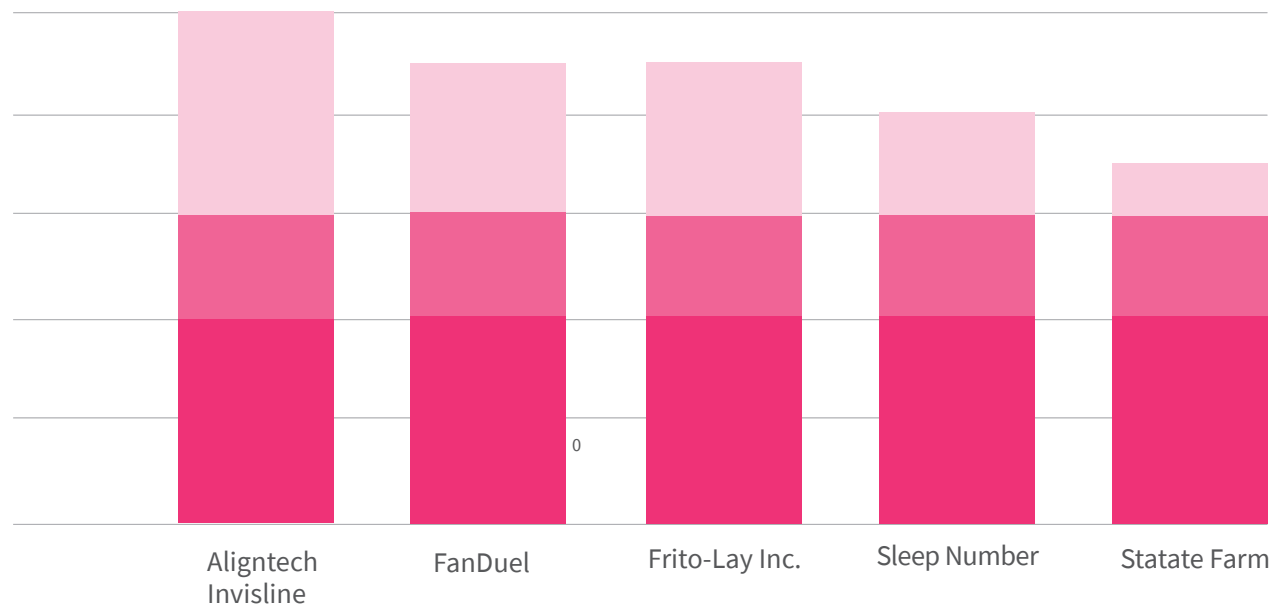
## Key Takeaways

- 1.) Out of 84 brands running Facebook Ads, just 10 brands had NFL related branding present in the ads.
- 2.) Ad format testing
  - a) SoFi, Aligntech Invisline and Centurylink were the only three brands that tested all four ad formats
  - b) 20 brands tested 3 ad formats
  - c) 25 brands tested 2 ad formats
  - d) 35 brands tested just a single ad format
  - e) 78 brands tested image ads
  - f) 23 brands tested carousel ads
  - g) 11 brands tested slideshow ads
  - h) 55 brands tested video ads

# Touchdown

## Points Scored

Ad creative testing Clear CTA and relevant headline present NFL related branding present in ads



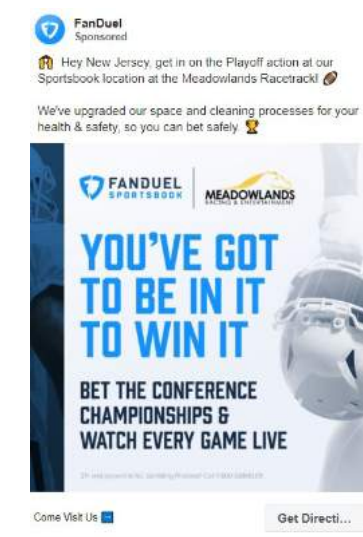
## Invisalign

Invisalign was the official clear aligner sponsor of the NFL, and though they did not have any specific campaign planned around NFL or Football, they still managed to do a good job when it comes to the ads. They were one of the three sponsors using all four ad formats. They roped in players like Aaron Jones and Cam Jordan to reach to promote their NFL sponsorship.



## FanDuel

Like Invisalign, FanDuel was not running any specific campaign either around NFL or football, but they used NFL branding and multiple ad formats in the ads. The primary focus of the ads was to encourage people to download the app and to get people to come to watch the games at their Sportsbook locations.

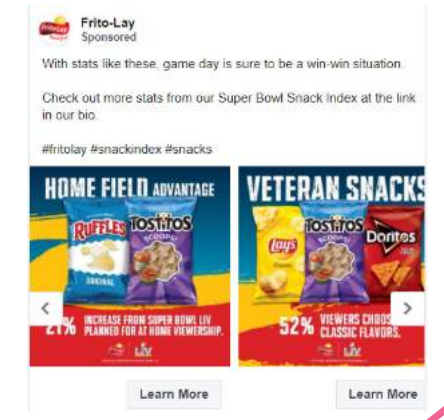




## Frito-Lay Inc.

Frito-Lay Inc. scored well in our campaign creativity ranking. The brand was able to maintain its winning streak with the ads too. Apart from their popular “Twas the Night Before Super Bowl” ads they also had captivating ads promoting their one of a kind Super Bowl Snack Index report.

Who doesn’t munch while watching their favorite team playing, keeping this in mind Frito-Lay also promoted some interesting snack recipes in their ads.



## State Farm

State Farm relied on video ads to convey “State Farm offers everyone surprisingly great rates”. They used popular Football stars Patrick Mahomes and Aaron Rodgers to connect with their audience. The two short video ads that became very popular this season were “The Steakhouse Ad” and “The Barber Shop Ads”. In the former ad, while Rodgers and Jake discuss insurance rates from State Farm, Mahomes is busy submerging (quite literally) the steak in ketchup, which is a clever play on Patrick’s love for ketchup. In the barbershop ad, people can be seen getting Patrick Mahomes’ haircut to get special insurance rates



## Sleep Number

Sleep Number had already captured the hearts of its audience with its ads featuring John Randle. The short video ads run under this campaign were comic and memorable. Apart from the ad under John Randle The Comeback campaign, Sleep Number also continued with the regular ads promoting their various range of products. However, Sleep Number was not using all the ad formats in their Facebook Ads.



## Hail Mary

The lowest-scoring brands in this category include some of the big names like Coca-Cola, Allegiant Air, Motorola, and Heinz. Coca-Cola was running ads around their campaign "Together Tastes Better" and, as always, Coca-Cola aced when it came to conveying brand messaging but they failed to connect any of their ads with NFL or Football. And almost all the brands didn't use multiple ad formats.



# Landing Page And Tracking Setup

When we make a good clickable ad (with high CTR), the job is only half done. Whether a user is going to convert or not depends on the landing page that we use. A good landing page is one that is consistent with the messaging of ads, has a clear CTA, and is designed to evoke only one specific action from the user.

To get the most out of your Facebook ad spend, it is necessary to install Facebook Pixel and set up conversions. It not only helps to track conversions and build audiences, it is also indispensable for ad optimization.

Keeping the above points in mind we evaluated the NFL sponsors on the following criteria:

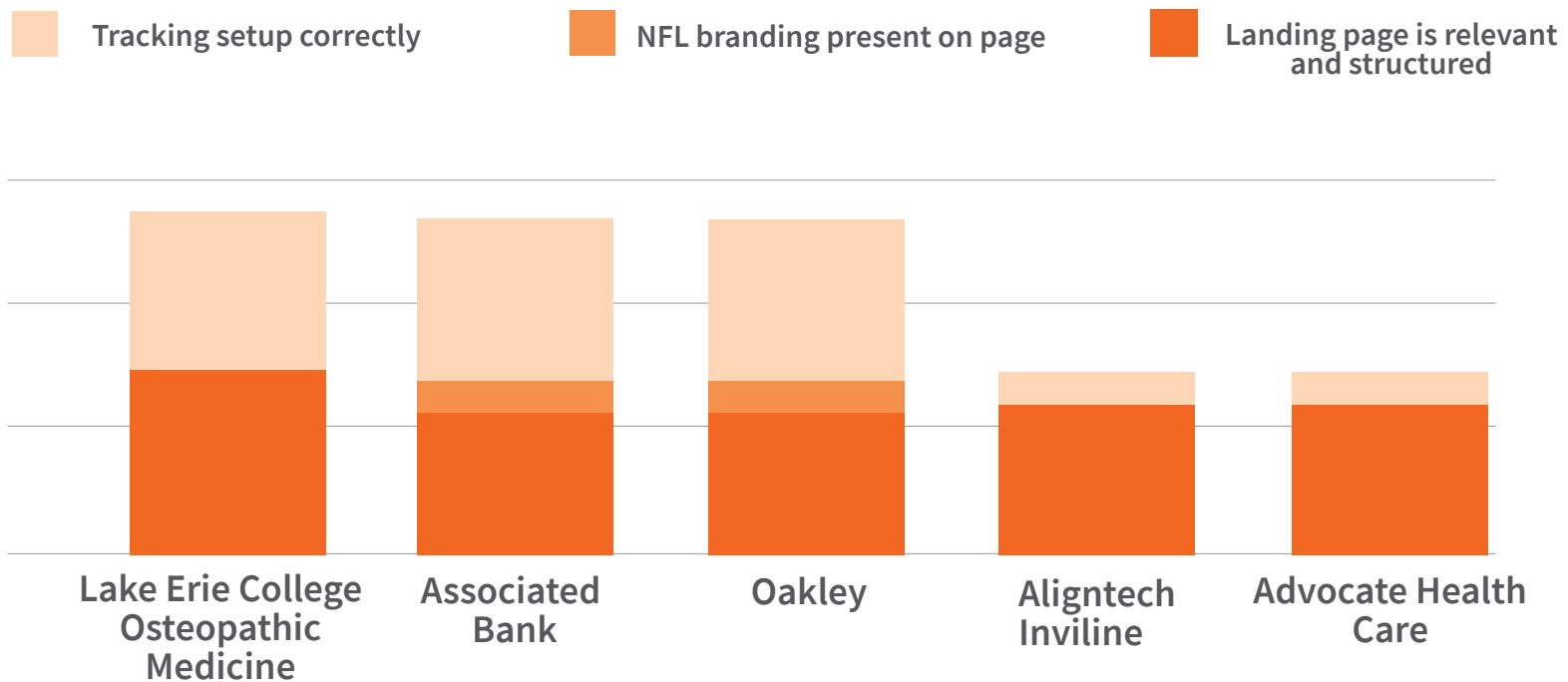
- 🏈 Coherence in landing page message and the corresponding Facebook Ad
- 🏈 NFL or NFL team-related branding on the landing page
- 🏈 Clear CTA
- 🏈 Facebook Pixel installed on the landing page
- 🏈 Facebook Pixel is firing correctly on the landing page and other pages in the funnel

## Key Insights

- 🏈 Out of 83 sponsors running Facebook Ads, only 14 had any kind of NFL related branding present on their landing pages.
- 🏈 Out of 83, only 28 brands had an error-free Facebook Pixel setup.
- 🏈 For 7 brands the landing page content did not match with the ads

# Touchdown

With 83 brands running Facebook Ads, it was quite surprising to see that not many of them fulfilled all the criteria of landing page evaluation. Most of the brands did not have any kind of NFL branding present on their landing pages and even those who did lacked proper Facebook Pixel setup.



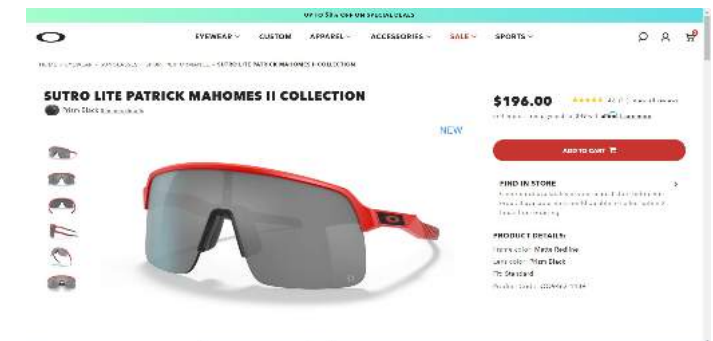
## Lake Erie College Osteopathic Medicine

Lake Erie College Osteopathic Medicine was the winner of the category. Though they were not running any ads from NFL nit their landing was in-line with their ads and had a single CTA. They were few of the brands that had proper pixel setup. It was also one of the few brands scoring well when it came to landing page speed.



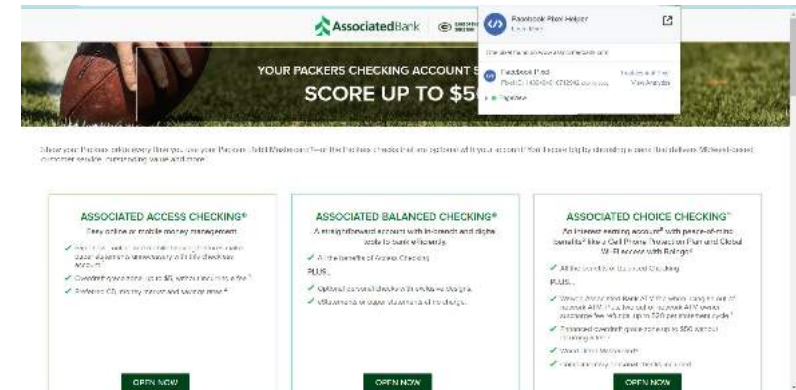
## Oakley

Oakley had a nice NFL related branding on their landing pages. Their ads were promoting Patrick Mahomes's Signature Series Sutro Lite collection and their ads were directly taking to this product page. Their tracking was correctly set up and all the eCommerce events were firing correctly.



## Associated Bank

Associated Bank's association with Green Bay Packers was clearly reflected on their landing page. The above the fold section was kept pretty simple without any distracting elements and was able to convey all the three account options available at first glance. The tracking was also set up correctly for the pages.



## Invisalign

The official smile partner of NFL- Invisalign did not have any NFL related branding present on their landing page but the landing page was in-line with the ads and had a simple form for the users to check if the treatment was right for them. The use of images to convey the problems associated with teeth was clever and creative. The landing page was kept short and the pixel was firing correctly on all the pages.





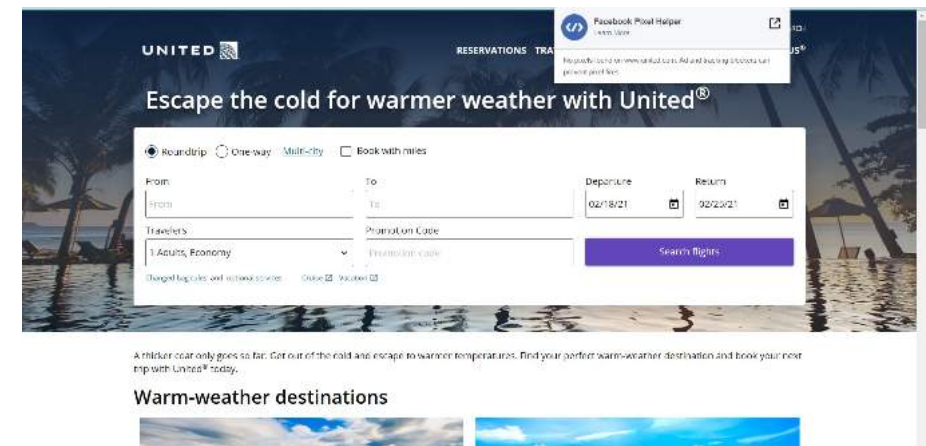
## Advocate Health Care

Advocate Health Care was promoting a virtual care program for COVID-19. With their above the fold message We Got You, the brand tried to provide people reassurance that they are not alone in this pandemic and there is somebody to help them. The landing page had a single CTA and provided all the necessary information (like self-assessment, vaccine information and expert tips) on the single page.

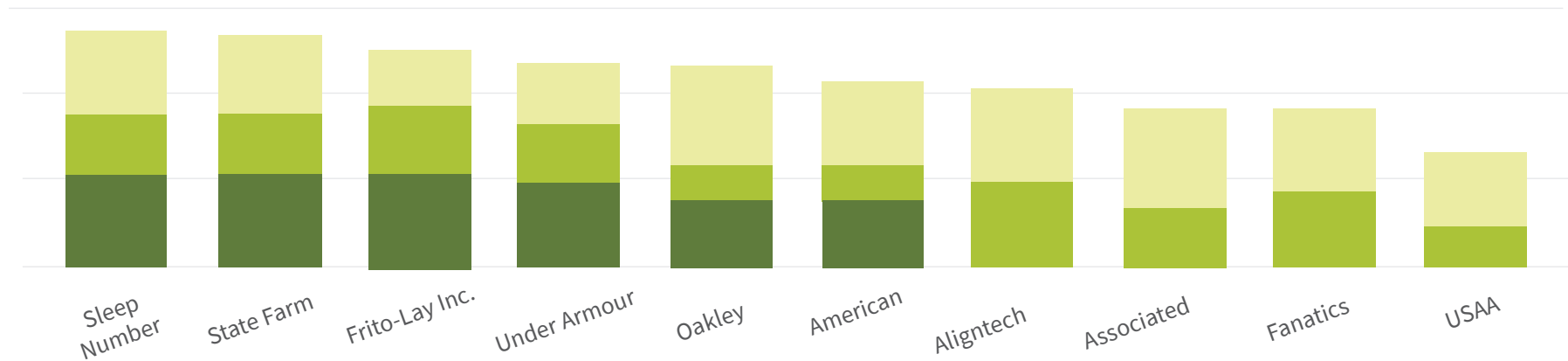
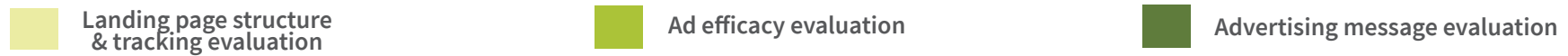


## Hail Mary

Our lowest scorer in this category was United Airlines. Though their ads were pretty creative and the landing page was in-line with the ads. But they did not have any NFL related branding and nor they had any pixel on their pages.



## Top 10 Scorers





## Conclusion

The NFL has always been a marketer's paradise and TV and in-stadium ads that run during the NFL have a loyal fan base. Every year brands come forward with their multimillion-dollar advertisements which they promote heavily on TV and in-stadium.

With the stadiums being empty for most of the games, brands were expected to play their best cards on digital platforms. But, Facebook Ad analysis of the 135 NFL sponsors had some surprising results with just 61% of the NFL sponsors running Facebook Ads to reach their target audience. Even more surprising was the fact that only three (just 3%...yes just 3%) of the brands had specific campaigns planned around NFL or football.

We did analyse the Facebook Ads of NFL sponsors in two phases: one during mid-January and then again in Super Bowl week hoping to see some brand activity on Facebook Ads during the concluding week of the season. But the results were the same.

For a nation that worships football, NFL related Facebook Ads campaigns was a missed opportunity for most of the brands. 89% of brands we tracked didn't plan well to leverage Facebook Ads in their media mix.

Even our MVP of Facebook Ads, Sleep Number scored only 13.80 (out of 17) in our scoring system. They had a great campaign, good ads, and a good landing page but they also didn't plan well on multiple levels.

### **After analysing Facebook ads for NFL sponsors we learnt that:**

- 🏈 Most of the brands did not have any NFL related campaigns and even the four brands that did fail when it comes to ad testing, with 3 of them just testing 1 ad format and 1 brand testing 2 ad formats.
- 🏈 Image ads were the most popular ad format, with 57% of the brands going for them. Video ads remain the second most popular ad format with 40% of the brands testing video ads.
- 🏈 Tracking setup remains one of the most ignored areas when it comes to Facebook Ads with just 20% of the brands having proper pixel setup.

# WHO WE ARE

We are a data-driven marketing company specializing in performance marketing, search engine optimization, and analytics. We help businesses maximize ROI on digital advertising using analytics and data-driven techniques.

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