

Five companies that did it right: Using pop culture in advertising

 By [James White](#)

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The worst thing that can happen to an ad is nothing. Nobody sees it, and if they do, they don't remember it. It can be tricky to create an ad that's both memorable and original, but who's to say that you can't do some recycling?

Using a pop culture reference in your ad or other content is the perfect way to grab and keep a viewer's attention. It's taking something familiar to them, like a TV show or song, and then mixing it up by adding information relevant to your brand.

Here are five brands that borrowed from pop culture to make their content go viral.

KBG Law Firm with *The Office*

KBG, a law firm that specialises in personal injury suits, made an [Office](#) inspired infographic to show people how to avoid workplace injuries in the first place. It plays off of an episode called "Safety Training" and uses fonts, pictures and icons from the show to connect the two.

Michael Scott, the self-proclaimed "World's Best Boss" in the show, narrates the infographic as well. Incorporating the visuals and *The Office's* quirky humour keeps people engaged as they read the graphic.

Game of Thrones

A show as visually interesting as [Game of Thrones](#) easily lends itself to ad concepts. Hootsuite created its take on the show's 3-D map opening sequence to show how it can help connect all of your social media accounts.

Sesame Street took things a step further with its "Game of Chairs" parody, using the same characters as the original and slipping in references to the show, like being late to a certain wedding and asking for a sweater because winter is coming. Each of these brands uses incredible attention to detail and respects the spirit of the show while adapting it to its own unique audience.

Snickers with The *Brady Bunch*

Snickers already has a good thing going with its "you're not you when you're hungry" shtick, but they made it even better by tossing in action star Danny Trejo, Steve Buscemi, and *The Brady Bunch*. This is one pop throwback that's clearly not aimed at teens, who probably don't remember the show, but still hits a key demographic: their parents or even older siblings watching the Super Bowl, where the spot aired. It's a [high-tech ad](#), which certainly catches viewers' attention, but the classic *Brady Bunch* theme is what keeps them watching.

Bud Light with Pac Man

Speaking of the Super Bowl, Bud Light took a similar tack and used an update to a [classic game](#) in its advert. If you haven't played Pac Man before, you've at least heard of it and understand the concept enough that the idea of playing a life-sized version is pretty amazing. Throwing a person into the game is like throwing the viewers into it, too, putting them right into the middle of that good time Bud Light is selling.

Google Maps and Pokemon

What [started off as a prank](#) of sorts became the perfect ad for Google Maps. The service planted digital Pokemon throughout its maps of landmarks and popular locations, encouraging people to become Pokemon Masters by catching them. The ad took something familiar, a cartoon and card game that most of the people using Maps grew up with, and brings it to life. By turning itself into the game, Google Maps hit this one out of the park.

Using pop culture in ads and other content is one of the best ways to make sure people see - and engage with - the material you're putting out there. Get creative with the theme while staying true to its essence. Viewers will appreciate it. And if done well, you can get most of a fandom on board with whatever you're selling.

ABOUT JAMES WHITE

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