I really liked that Super Bowl ad for Doritos

But I don’t ever buy Doritos. I also never drink Mountain Dew. I certainly do not drink Bud Light. Or Michelob Ultra. I don’t use Tide. And I am not about to go get life insurance from Mass Mutual.

If you prefer real beer to Bud Light, no amount of clever/funny/slick ads will change your mind. If you, like me, avoid sugary sodas, having Morgan Freeman appear in an ad drinking one, is not going to make you run out and buy a case.

They are memorable

As a marketing communications person, I’ve been closely watching Super Bowl ads for the past 20 years. When I worked at an ad agency in Boston in the 1990s, we had time set aside to view the Super Bowl ad reels, and discuss. If you study Super Bowl ads, you can see that many are memorable, and are often discussed for years after they aired. Here, check out this list of the top spots from the last 30 years and see how many you remember.

They cost a lot

Super Bowl ads are very expensive: expensive to produce (how much do you think Morgan Freeman got paid to swill the Dew?) and expensive to place. They are very high profile, and are seen by millions of people. Most of these ads are what the industry calls “image ads.” That is, these ads promote a brand’s image more so than making a sale. They raise “brand awareness.” And yet, any advertiser that has the budget necessary to run ads on the Super Bowl already has brand awareness. So why bother?

But do they have a good ROI?

To use an industry term, what exactly is the ROI (return on investment) on a Super Bowl ad? What do you think? Do you think the high investment provides the returns to justify doing so?