



KANTAR

The Power of Creative; Christmas ads and beyond

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Imagine if ads were as good all year as they are at Christmas...

Now imagine how your brand could grow if the same energy and passion that goes in to creating Christmas ads was dedicated to ads that are created throughout the rest of the year.

Our research shows that Christmas ads are more enjoyable and have a real feel good factor about them, provoking emotions like affectionate, attracted, excited, inspired, contented and proud, much more than other ads. These good feelings halo on to the brand and increase the level of warmth and love for the brands featured. In a world where advertising is often seen as an unwelcome disruption, the joy and success that Christmas ads bring reinforces that advertising can still be very effective when executed in way that resonates with the target audience and is tailored to the context in which it will be experienced.

In 2018 consumers responded most positively to ads that told realistic, simpler stories with more traditional ideas and 'real' scenarios. 2019 saw a swing back to those that bring to life the magic of Christmas and contribute to feelings of excitement, joy and anticipation. Three learnings stand out:

- 01 The greater the emotional engagement, the more enduring the memories so take the audience on an emotional journey.
- 02 For these memories to grow your brand, the brand and what makes it different from others in a meaningful way, needs to be in the driving seat not an afterthought.
- 03 You don't necessarily need a new creative platform just because it's Christmas.

In this report we explore what it takes to succeed with a Christmas ad and include questions you can ask yourself throughout the creative development process. Apply these insights to your ads all year for advertising that is both creative and effective.



Lynne Deason,
Head of Creative Excellence,
Kantar UK



01 Take your audience on
an emotional journey

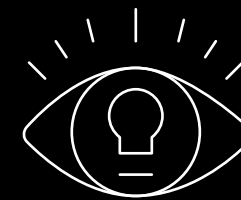
A stand out feature of Christmas ads is their ability to earn viewer attention. 2019's crop is no exception, earning attention through dramatic stories that provoke a rainbow of emotions.

Humans are neurologically programmed to pay attention to things that make us feel something. Fear, on the one hand helps to keep us alive. On the other, joyful and significant events in our lives evoke very powerful emotional reactions and bring us pleasure. We are also primed to pay attention to things that are particularly personally relevant to us and to things that are very different.

These are key levers that you can use when combining magic and logic to ensure that the ads and content you create will 'earn our attention'. The more emotion

an ad evokes, the deeper we process it, which in turn creates more enduring memories. Advertising isn't something that most people actively choose to pay attention to, which is why creativity and human insights are such powerful enablers in creating content that will be noticed and remembered.

We summarise the degree to which people show a response on their face whilst watching an ad in a measure called Expressiveness. On AVERAGE the expressiveness of 2019's very diverse set of ads is in the top 20% of all UK ads, which is incredibly high. What these ads do so well is take people on an emotional journey. They provoke a rainbow of emotions, not just making people smile. Even ads that performed less well overall provoked an emotional reaction, although admittedly not always balanced on the positive side!



89

Average Expressiveness score across all ads tested

Ads from Aldi, John Lewis and M&S made consumers feel most emotional in 2019

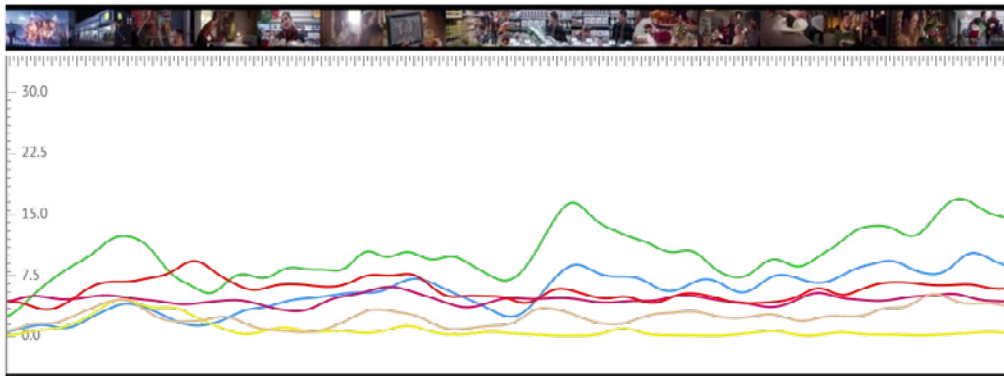


Images courtesy of Aldi and John Lewis

Screenshot taken from M&S 'Go Jumpers for Christmas'

The storyline in the Lidl ad doesn't provoke a lot of emotions

While humans pay attention to things that are highly personally relevant and familiar when a mirror is held up too close to day to day real life, it can fall flat. Unfortunately, this was the case with the brand ad from Lidl. The storyline doesn't provoke strong emotional reactions and overall the story struggles to earn attention and isn't seen as distinctive.



- Expressiveness
- Smirk
- Smile
- Sentimentality
- Brow Furrow
- Surprise

"In the Christmas advert stakes, it's not that memorable compared to some other retailers, and is not that different to many other ads portraying the usual Christmas family scene"

Verbatim from research



The funny, surprising and heart-warming moments in the Amazon ad mean it emotionally engages people from the start to the end

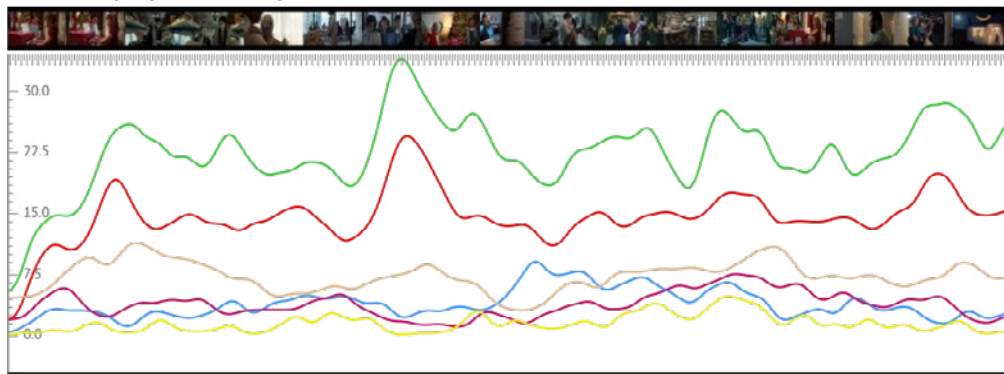
If you strip back the storyline in Amazon's ad to its bare bones, it could be considered an equally every day scenario of an Amazon employee making deliveries, returning home to her family for Christmas at the end of her shift. There is a bigger idea here though, a bigger human truth that emotionally resonates with us – Everybody Needs Somebody.

The story has heart-warming moments, but it's also funny and surprising, and is supported

by a very enjoyable and well-known track that helps us 'get the idea' without having to think hard about it. This overcomes the human truth that our brains are lazy and rarely work hard to figure ads out. The ad emotionally engages people from start to end. It has a real feel-good factor about it and people really enjoy it. These ingredients transform what could have been a very ordinary story into something extraordinary and memorable, making it one of the top performing ads.

"I loved the advert. One of the best I have seen in a long time. Very funny in parts, and I felt very moved by parts of it. Fantastic"

Verbatim from research



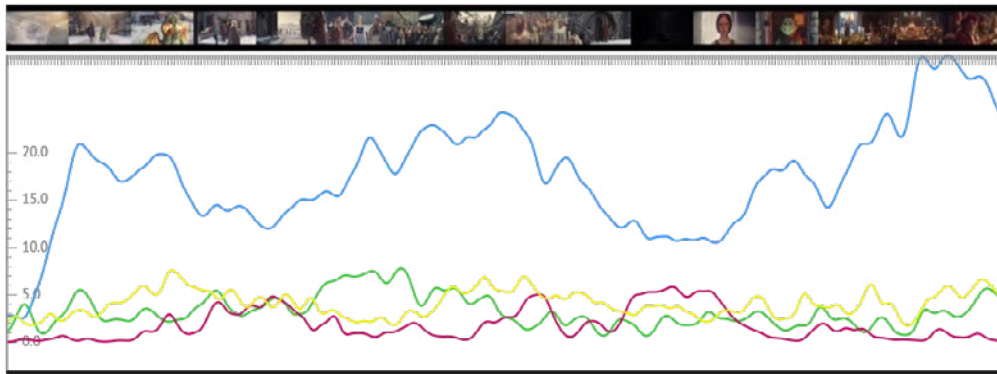
- Expressiveness
- Smile
- Sadness
- Sentimentality
- Surprise
- Brow Furrow



Excitable Edgar takes people on a emotional journey full of twists and turns

John Lewis (together with Waitrose) added to the joy of Christmas by bringing another loveable and emotionally engaging story to our screens about true friendship, inclusivity and finding the perfect gift, all wrapped up of course in the excitement and magic of Christmas. It is interesting that the choice of gift – a Christmas pudding – is one that is traditionally associated with Waitrose and not John Lewis.

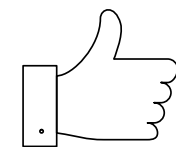
The eagerly anticipated ad is hugely enjoyable, being the most enjoyed ad of Christmas 2019. The ad takes people on an incredible emotional journey, of ups and downs, twists and turns. There are moments of surprise, followed by moments that make people smile, as well as scenes that provoke great sadness, ending in lots of smiles as the little girl finds the perfect gift for her very excitable friend.



■ Surprise ■ Smile
■ Sentimentality ■ Sadness



100
Expressiveness



96
Enjoyment

“Great advert, joyful, sad, joyful, don’t know how the people think these adverts up but they are really clever”

Verbatim from research

Music is very prominent and often very enjoyable in 2019's Christmas ads

Music is another very prominent feature in the ads. Music drives what we feel and can really underpin our enjoyment of ads, or in some cases provoke a negative reaction. Only two of the ads didn't feature prominent music and there were many famous tracks to boot. The Simple Minds track in the Argos ad came out top in terms of enjoyment*. This might have supported ticket sales for Simple Minds 2020 40 years of hits tour!

In the case of Christmas ads, music often plays an important role in conveying a Christmassy feel and atmosphere. Music guides the emotional journey people take through an ad, it shapes how they interpret what they see happening and how they put it all together.

Argos	Simple Minds don't you forget about me	
Amazon	Solomon Burke Everybody needs somebody to love	
M&S (Main Brand)	House of Pain Jump around	
Aldi	Robbie Williams Let me entertain you	
Visa	Queen Somebody to love (cover)	
Walkers	Mariah Carey All I want for Christmas	
Tesco	The Ronettes Sleigh ride	
Smyths Toys	Beyoncé If I were a boy (cover)	
IKEA	D Double E Silence the critics	
Asda	Radford Music and Rohan Stevenson Lighting up Christmas	
Debenhams	Fleur East Size	

Ask yourself:

What is it about your ad and the idea that underpins it that means it will earn attention and people will love it?

What will make people connect with your ad emotionally?
How is relevant to them?

What's the role music is intended to play in the ad's success? Does the proposed track delivery that?

* Question about music enjoyment
not asked for all ads

02 To be creative
and effective,
the brand
mustn't take
a back seat!



If you take one thing from this report that will impact the effectiveness of your Christmas advertising, or indeed any advertising you create, then let it be that if the ad works without your brand in it, alarm bells should be ringing...

There are several routes to ensuring that people will remember your brand was the one being advertised. Ensuring that your brand plays a key role in the drama of the ad is a very effective one and Tesco's ad celebrating 100 years of delivering Christmas does this exceptionally well. The brand is totally integrated in to the drama of the ad and it is impossible to replay the story without mentioning the Tesco van.

This ad, along with a few other top performers, provides powerful proof that you can achieve brand integration without needing to compromise on creativity or your ad's ability to earn attention.

'All I want for Christmas' is another excellent iteration of the Walkers campaign was first launched in 1995 with the 'Welcome Home' ad featuring Gary Lineker. The creative idea was a success from the outset, with funny unexpected stories about Walker's crisps being so irresistible that even the nicest person will turn mean to get their hands on them. This latest execution still holds true to the original creative idea.



The story of the ad is really engaging, with twists and turns, and funny moments. It keeps your attention to the moment when Mariah steals the bag of crisps and then on to the final climax when the pigeon steals the one crisp that she had been generous enough to let the elf have, right out of his hand. The story and the way it's brought to life are also easy to understand, perfect for our lazy brains.

"I liked how it went back to the future and seeing the little touches like bullseye made me feel nostalgic. I liked that the Tesco van kept popping up because a lot of these long Christmas adverts make it hard to know who it is for until the end."

Verbatim from research

At Christmas time brands may borrow interest to earn people's attention by using imagery, songs or other famous things in attempt to stand out from other ads. This can also be used to convey that Christmas feeling. Difficulties arise when the thing or things that you're borrowing interest from take over, and your brand doesn't have a role to play. Introducing your brand early in the story isn't the route to having a strongly branded TV ad. When creating digital content, especially when it's skippable, it's important that the brand appears in the first five seconds, but that doesn't guarantee that your ad will be well branded either.

The full length brand ad from Asda demonstrates where borrowed interest can go wrong. The ad does a fantastic job of earning attention through a heart-warming enjoyable and emotionally provocative story, but Asda plays no obvious role in what happens in the ad. Aside from the green colour in the sky and the brand logo and line at the end, there are few cues to signal that this is an ad from Asda.

This situation is similar for Iceland. The play on words of Iceland presenting 'the magic of Frozen', doesn't balance out the fame, anticipation and dramatic focus on the film Frozen 2 meaning that the Iceland brand gets lost in the drama.

There isn't a clear role for John Lewis or Waitrose in the Excitable Edgar ad either. What supports the effectiveness of this ad is the PR that gets generated around it and the supporting line of products, merchandise and instore activity, because it's awaited with such anticipation and has become a topic of conversation at Christmas time.

When your ad borrows interest from something else to help it earn attention, whether that's iconic Christmas cues, a well-known music track, a celebrity or something else, it is essential that you make sure that what you're borrowing doesn't totally take over, meaning that your brand is an afterthought; an irrelevant aside that doesn't really even need to be there.

Ask yourself:

Is your brand present and what makes it special and different from others at the heart of the idea?

Does your brand play a key role in the drama of the ad?




A young boy with short brown hair and glasses is looking down at a camera. He is wearing a red and white striped shirt. The background is filled with out-of-focus, colorful Christmas lights in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. The text "03 You don't need a new creative idea just because it's Christmas" is overlaid on the image in a white, sans-serif font.

03 You don't need a new
creative idea just
because it's Christmas

Consistency and coherence across all brand encounters are immensely powerful in establishing mental shortcuts, as we see with Coca-Cola.

The Coca-Cola trucks ad first aired in 1995 and despite having seen the ad many times before, people still really enjoy seeing it and it continues to make the Coca-Cola brand feel different to other alternatives. The brand is central to what happens in the ad. Reinforce this with consistency over years and years and people can't fail to remember which brand was being advertised. It's the top performing ad in terms of branding, hitting the 100th percentile. 82% of people asked, said that they couldn't fail to remember the ad was for Coca-Cola compared to a UK average of 37%!

One challenge with consistency is that it can make it much more difficult for a new message to stand out. In 2019 the ad includes a polite reminder to ask people to recycle. Although less memorable, people are receptive to Coca-Cola's environmental message.

A young girl in a red winter coat stands in a snowy park at night, looking up at a glowing heart-shaped light display. The scene is illuminated by a street lamp and the heart-shaped light display, with snow falling around her.

"I love it! It's a Coca-Cola tradition. You definitely know xmas is coming when you see the Coca-Cola ad!"

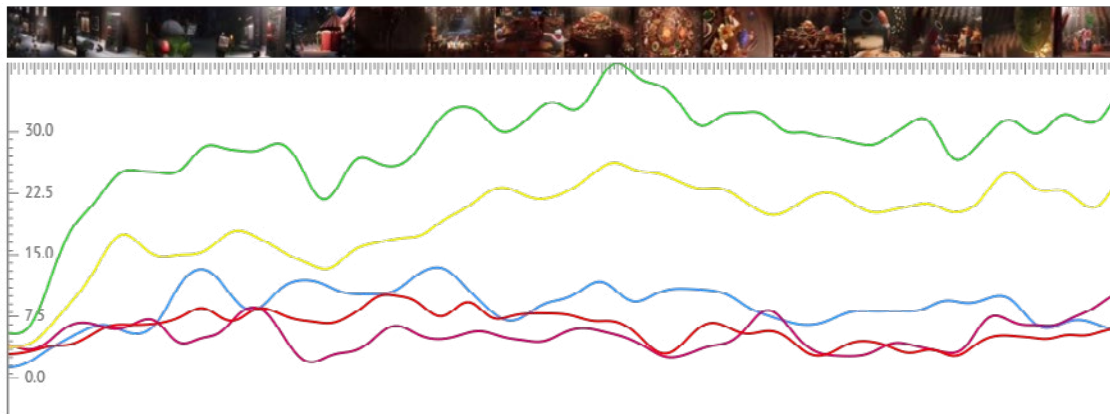
Verbatim from research

Aldi's Greatest Showman makes people smile from the outset

The M&S food ad shows that you don't need to have a new creative platform or idea just because it's Christmas. The ad is an unquestionably festive expression of the "this is not just food..." campaign idea. Many brands walk away from their existing campaigns and brand cues at Christmas, but this ad shows that it can be possible to use the same creative idea for a brand but wrap it up in all things Christmas. The benefit; fantastic branding that's in the top 10% of all ads tested. This ad also focuses on showcasing the delicious temptations they have on offer resulting in a more immediate short-term desire for their products that will drive people to their stores.

Aldi's Kevin the Carrot put on an amazing show and people loved it. 'Amazing Christmas Show' is the most 'different' and 'emotional' ad in the research and is among the top performers on 'enjoyable', 'attention-grabbing', and ability to create love for the brand.

The ad makes people smile from the outset and in terms of evoking an emotional reaction, it achieves the highest score it can possibly get, being in the top 1% of all ads researched in the UK. Not only does the ad take us on an emotional journey, it is also one that people really enjoy, and it is conveyed in a way that makes people sit up and pay attention to it, with people feeling that the ad is involving, distinctive and interesting. This ad works seriously hard to earn people's attention, and succeeds!



- Expressiveness
- Sentimentality
- Brow Furrow
- Surprise
- Smile

"I loved it! smiled so much my face hurts and I'm still smiling!"

Verbatim from research



Where the ad performs relatively less well is in terms of branding. When we look in to this in more detail, we see that people who shop in Aldi are much more familiar with Kevin and his carrot family as branding devices, but those more distant from the brand find it more difficult.

It's important to remember that for this ad, and all the others tested, we are just looking at one ad in isolation. Aldi has had lots of ads and other activities to support their push for success at Christmas. The ads strapline 'Put on an Amazing show this Christmas' features heavily in the activity, reinforcing the idea that you can get everything you need at Aldi to be able to pull off a perfect Christmas. Kevin, his family and his archenemy Russell and his mob feature everywhere, whether it's the teaser ads, instore facings, Facebook posts, in store merchandise, through to promoting the company's Christmas Surplus Food initiative. Robbie Williams also posted a video of him with Kevin on his own Facebook page, threatening to

take a nibble from him as he's a vegetarian. Kevin the Carrot also went down well with UK grocery shoppers, as the addition of new characters to the story helped to sell 2,498 tonnes of sprouts – an increase of 44% on last year. (Worldpanel Division, Grocery Market Share 12 w/e 29 Dec 2019).

Kantar's TotalSocial solution provides measurement of and deep insights about the word of mouth for a brand in both offline and online contexts. Despite not being the highest spender in the last three months of the year, Aldi retained its number one position Total Social score ranking. People were talking about many aspects of Aldi's Christmas campaign providing further evidence of the effectiveness of this creative platform and the buzz created by their £50 wine advent calendar.

The consistent use of creative elements across time and across touchpoints establishes mental shortcuts. The benefit of this is not only that these strengthen the branding of individual ads over

time, but that these can also be leveraged to help the brand and its associations come to mind more easily, without active thought, helping the brand win out at key purchase or usage decisions. Brand logos, shapes, colours etc can all help trigger those mental connections.

Brands need to do research to make sure that they know what the distinctive assets for their brand are. It is very risky to assume that because something has been consistently used in a few ads that people will connect it to the brand intuitively in the same way that the people who work for the brand do.

A good example here is Very. The brand has used the pink present box in a few Christmas ads, but the connection just isn't there for consumers yet. When a lit up pink box doesn't instantly trigger the brand 'Very', the ad becomes a story about communities coming together at Christmas and the brand has no intrinsic role in making this happen, it's just a pink present.

Ask yourself:

Do you really need a new creative platform, or can you reap the benefits of consistency and extend the idea to work Christmas?

Where the ad is a continuation of an existing brand platform, what is it about the execution that makes it feel fresh and engaging whilst remaining true to the core idea?

Key learnings

— A typical stand out feature of Christmas ads is their ability to earn viewer attention. 2019's crop is no exception, earning attention through dramatic stories that provoke a rainbow of emotions. The magical power of creativity transforms the ordinary in to the extraordinary. The greater the emotional engagement, the more enduring the memories.

Do your ads have the same magical ability to earn attention that Christmas ads do?

— For these memories to grow your brand, the brand and what makes it different from others in a meaningful way, needs to be in the driving seat not an afterthought! If it's possible to sum up your ad in a sentence without your brand being mentioned then deafening alarm bells should be ringing!

Is your brand and what makes it special and different from others at the core of your brand's creative platform?

— Consistency and coherence across all brand encounters is immensely powerful. You don't necessarily need a new creative platform just because it's Christmas. Don't fall in to the trap of assuming that consumers have the same mental shortcuts to your brand as you do. Brand Imprint research identifies what your distinctive brand assets really are, so that you can ensure these are integrated from the outset.

Put yourself in the shoes of your target audience. Will every encounter that they have with your brand reinforce the same set of mental associations in their brains?

The questions that we have peppered through the report can help you make sure that you're on the right track but obtaining the consumer view is essential. When you get close to a creative idea and you know exactly what it's trying to achieve and how its intended to work, your view may well be different from the consumer. So let us support you in creating advertising that is both creative and effective.

And remember that the insights into Christmas ads in this report can apply all year...

How we measured the response to 2019's Christmas ads

Now in its fifth year, Kantar's annual Christmas TV ad research unwraps the secrets behind what makes festive ads memorable for consumers and successful for advertisers.

Using its LinkNow creative development tool via Kantar Marketplace, Kantar asked over 3000 UK consumers what they thought about 20 Christmas ads.

The research reviewed the critical factors that have been proven to determine whether an ad will be effective; if it

will motivate people to buy in the short term and if it will contribute to the brand's success in the longer term.

Partnering with Affectiva, Kantar also used facial coding to find out how consumers engaged emotionally with each ad, determining the power of the ad to provoke an emotional reaction, and the nature of that emotion.

This is key to understanding why the ads are effective – or not.

Ads tested:

Aldi – Amazing Christmas Show
Walkers – Too good to share
Amazon – Everybody Needs Somebody
John Lewis – Excitable Edgar
Tesco – Delivering Christmas
M&S Food – This is not just food

Sainsburys – Nicholas the Sweep
Argos – the Book of Dreams
Smyths Toys Superstores – If I were a toy
Asda – Let's make Christmas Extra Special
Lidl – Christmas you can believe in
IKEA – Silence the critics
Visa – Where you shop matters

Iceland – Magic of Frozen
TK Maxx – Gift Different
M&S – Go Jumpers for Christmas
Very – Get more out of Giving
Debenhams – Three for two
Boots – Gift like you get them
Coca-Cola – Holidays are coming

To find out more...

For more information about this research, Kantar Marketplace or to maximise the potential of your brand communication at every stage please get in touch with Sam.Clay@kantar.com or your Kantar contact.

Acknowledgements.

With thanks to our clients at Walkers, Aldi and John Lewis for permitting use of their Christmas ads imagery.

KANTAR