THE FUTURE OF EXPERIENCE: CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGNS

Christmas and the rules of engagement for brands, technology and people
Over the last few years, marketing campaigns have started to take centre stage at Christmas. Today, people anticipate the first airings of the big brand Christmas ads – companies shroud their campaigns in secrecy until the big reveal, which for some is an event in itself. What is more fascinating though, is the explosion of marketing activations that go hand-in-hand with these campaigns. The marketing mix has grown exponentially – from offline and online advertising, point of sale, emails through to books, charitable causes, live experiential events, huge social media campaigns and the rest. Taken together, these campaigns are creating new experiences that are aimed at getting us truly engaged with brands at this important time of year.

Earlier this year we embarked upon a research project with Goldsmiths, University of London looking at how emerging technologies – virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI), wearables and the internet of things (IoT) – could reframe the customer experience. We found that these technologies are opening up opportunities for marketers to create new experiences around five key attributes – empathy, serendipity, privacy, adaptability and reciprocity. There can be no better time, than at Christmas to get an understanding of how, or indeed if, brands are using emerging technologies to create new and deeper connections with potential and existing customers.
What we found is that this is truly an experience-led Christmas, with brands really harnessing the combined power of data, digital and emerging technology alongside creativity to put the customer at the heart of their campaigns. And they are creating experiences that surprise, delight and engage emotionally. From VR experiences instore, to AR treasure hunts and personalised AI-powered chatbots, the big brands are well and truly proving the use cases of these emerging technologies as part of the overall marketing mix.

The team at Goldsmiths have measured a number of high profile Christmas campaigns against the five attributes mentioned previously and their use of technology, and unsurprisingly, many score highly on the empathy scale. Christmas is after all an emotional time. But serendipity has really come to the fore – we see a wide variety of tactics used to surprise, inspire and delight. This is extremely important and moving into next year, allowing the customer to discover something new and different themselves will be a key experience ingredient.

Christmas is an opportunity for brands to frame their connection with the consumer based on what they stand for – it’s a platform from which they can grow relationships. What’s important here is that as well as providing great experiences over a special time, companies are also able to collect the data and insights that improve the customer journeys post-Christmas too. Introducing chatbots into the shopping journey now is indeed an astute move.

By examining how brands are bringing the possibilities of using emerging technologies to life in this report, we hope that we can provide inspiration to those still considering how these technologies can work as part of their marketing strategies for 2017 and beyond.
Introduction

*The Future of Experience at Christmas* explores how brands have been using emerging technologies and a variety of other elements to enhance customer experiences during Christmas 2016. This is the year of transforming from the outside in, with customer-relevant and digitally-powered campaigns from brands that seek to access consumer needs and create meaningful experiences through interactive and responsive technologies.

Our recent report on the *Future of Experience* (released July 2016) found that we are in a time of ‘consumer experience’, where people want meaningful, personal, consistent, delightful experiences. Our research found five rules of engagement that influence how brands and businesses frame their understanding of what it means to create and manage experiences of the future.

- Serendipity
- Empathy
- Privacy
- Adaptability
- Reciprocity
The festive season is a great time to apply these rules of engagement to popular Christmas campaigns. We’ve analysed how and why brands are using these rules, as well as emerging technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), Artificial Intelligence (AI), wearables and the Internet of Things (IoT) to engage consumers this Christmas.

Research included conceptual walking tours of campaigns and interviews with subject matter experts. We also carried out quantitative polling. Consisting of one online survey of a sample of over 500 adults working in marketing across a number of industries, and a second online survey of over 2,000 UK adults (see methodologies on page 16).

Creating meaning through personalisation of experience is a key trend, with over a third of consumers (34%) stating its importance.

This is enacted in two different but complementary ways:

1. bringing people out into public to engage, experience, and share through interactive technologies and
2. using AI chatbots and messengers to achieve delightful personalisation in the home.

Christmas campaigns are increasingly asking the consumer to come forward to put their needs into the public realm so that brands can create experiences rather than just products that meet these needs.

While the five rules of engagement can be considered separately, as our initial report notes, they “lean into each other and happily overlap”. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Christmas campaigns, where finding the right blend of these rules allows marketers to speak to consumers on a number of experiential levels, finding just the right mix of serendipity and empathy, for example, to successfully engage their attention and encourage participation.

Almost one quarter (24%) of marketers believe using emerging technologies in Christmas campaigns provides an exciting opportunity.

More than half (52%) of marketers believe being aware of the five rules of engagement - that is seeking to generate some serendipity, empathy, privacy, adaptivity or reciprocity in Christmas campaigns - will help brands be more attractive to customers.

Almost a fifth (19%) believe the use of emerging technologies in campaigns would attract them to a brand.

17% of consumers haven’t seen a brand marketing campaign use emerging technologies before, but would be interested in doing so.
Serendipitous marketing campaigns hide the element of surprise and discovery, so amplify the experience and create memorable moments that are worth sharing. A moment of discovery for the consumer can increase the visibility of the brand and at the same time create close ties between brands and customers.

Brands recognise that creating experiences is more valuable than just pushing products, and at the end of the day is more profitable.

Christmas is a time steeped in tradition. Today brands want to extend beyond that tradition and emerging technologies can provide the path to do this. In fact, 44% of marketers believe that they can create surprising moments that exceed the expectations of tradition at Christmas using innovative technologies, and almost three quarters (74%) believe that creating emerging technology experiences this Christmas can surprise customers.

Running for twenty-one years, the Coca-Cola Holidays are Coming campaign has long held the consumer gaze. This year, social media users will be able to conjure up the Coca-Cola Christmas truck via social media, hashtags, Facebook queries and Twitter stickers. It is a serendipitous event in that Coca-Cola has worked to build trust and authenticity over time by providing consistent and reliable value for the experience.

Serendipity

- Essential to discovery, serendipity is also a crucial element towards building trust and authenticity
- An overly persistent effort to personalise often leads to a net reduction in possibilities
- Enhancing, not replacing, human actions should be the focus

SURPRISING MOMENTS 36%

More than a third (36%) of consumers want campaigns to surprise them.
Coca-Cola: Holidays Are Coming Campaign

- Twitter stickers campaign – using the #HolidaysAreComing hashtag in a tweet comes with a sticker of the Coca-Cola truck
- Truck tour - visitors have the opportunity to explore a winter wonderland on the truck and enjoy a free drink from its range
- Coca-Cola is running an on-pack promotion encouraging consumers to ‘Donate a Meal to Someone in Need this Christmas’ via FareShare, the UK-wide charity that tackles food waste and hunger

Serendipity is essential to discovery, but it’s also a crucial element towards building trust and authenticity. Values, ethics, and purpose provide the foundations of trust in brand engagement, but trying to overly engineer these can make an experience feel devoid of purpose and meaning. Imola Gaspar, Community Manager and Social communication at Coca-Cola echoes this sentiment precisely:

“We receive thousands upon thousands of queries – loyal consumers seeking the truck. So much so that Coca-Cola will employ a Facebook chatbot to respond”.

“The experience”, she notes, “is offline, it is encapsulated in the truck itself. Emerging technologies like the chatbot alongside the extensive social media campaign lead the consumers there.”

The sheer number of queries that can have responses via the chatbot indicates the incredible power of AI in creating a platform to enhance consumer experience. AI can power the response, bringing delight to more consumers.

Another serendipitous element is the Coca-Cola truck Twitter stickers, which enhance human actions and, at the same time, create trust and authenticity while building on the trusted name of Coca-Cola. They also embed the element of surprise and maybe just a hint of rebellion. The movement of the truck alongside the ‘Holidays Are Coming’ tag line gives a feeling of movement, adaptability and hopeful possibility.

As the Future of Experience report suggests, serendipity is about amplifying and supporting the best qualities of humanity. This clever campaign uses emerging technology to enhance human actions but does not replace the need for people to go there and be part of making, generating, and becoming the experience.
**John Lewis: Buster the Boxer**

- Advert that draws on warmth and humour
- Virtual Reality experience in store using Oculus Rift
- Snapchat partnered with John Lewis to create a lens that transforms you into Buster
- Buster, the fox and other animals are offered as stickers on Twitter
- 10% of the price of all cuddly toys goes to charity

John Lewis is also able to effectively amplify these qualities and use emerging technology to enhance them through various elements in its Buster the Boxer 2016 campaign.

Virtual Reality is one of the key elements of this campaign as John Lewis brings ‘Buster the Boxer’ to life through immersive Oculus Rift experiences in store. The Oculus Rift headset is fitted with a Leap Motion detector, and this communicates with a Kinect which is opposite to detect where the user’s hands are. Stepping into the other reality, the consumer spontaneously encounters unexpected possibilities and emotional responses. There’s also a more low-tech VR demo that is available for people at home on YouTube, that works with Google Cardboard.

This campaign is an indication of the brand’s understanding of the ‘alchemy of experience’ and its clear relationship to creating empathetic consumer experiences that are meaningful, personal and straightforward. In this campaign, John Lewis has chosen to ‘surprise and delight’ while still harnessing the epic power of empathy. The brand’s partnerships with charities in the past few years further the empathetic experience by drawing on consumer aspiration and desire for technologies to power social good.

The device itself offers a very personal experience of privacy where consumers have the opportunity to transcend to another environment, one full of fun and frolics. Adaptability is equally present with reciprocity as the baseline of the John Lewis campaign as they draw on the respect and personal connection inherent in the relationship with the consumer.
Another serendipitous campaign is Waitrose’s story of the Scandinavian robin on a troublesome journey home. Waitrose engages customers in a search and discovery hunt, offering an interactive map with clues to locate the robin on his journey home. Creating unique experiences with technology such as this in-store game prolongs the time that the consumer remains in store, helping them to equate Waitrose with a sense of fun and authenticity in its message.

Coming home is a central theme at Christmas and, this year, Waitrose follows John Lewis’ approach to giving animals a rich life of hope and joy-seeking.

The Scandinavian robin certainly takes its cue as an empathetic character – his journey delights the viewer. The experience of the robin draws such a human connection that Waitrose is launching a book alongside other robin-branded products that tells the story of the robin’s journey, indicating that the brand wants to turn this into a tradition for years to come. The book as a non-digital feature highlights the role of privacy, providing a non-digital personal moment, a story to share that will ultimately be read quietly at home.

**Waitrose: Scandinavian Robin’s Journey Home**

- Use of CGI technology accomplished a life-like robin as the star
- Multimedia including an interactive digital game in store, book of the robin’s journey, advert
- Charitable partnerships

---

**Empathy 50%**

- **10% Privacy**
- **15% Reciprocity**
- **5% Adaptability**
- **20% Serendipity**

---

10% Privacy

15% Reciprocity

5% Adaptability

20% Serendipity

---

Covent Garden: Where's Rudolph?

- Extensive use of AR technology is used to increase engagement with the consumer
- They are motivated by the participation in competitions to win offers

Another example of how serendipity is used through engaging customers in interactive experiences is in Covent Garden’s ‘Where's Rudolph?’ AR experience, which provides a welcome and enjoyable distraction for shoppers. Covent Garden’s festive setting includes the largest hand-picked Christmas tree in London which is enhanced with AR technology, so when visitors point the camera of their smartphones and use the Blippar app they can unlock offers for the shops close by. Visitors are challenged to find eight virtual reindeers by using the AR app and taking part in a daily competition.

Seeking reindeer in the streets around Covent Garden under the lights of beautiful chandeliers creates intrigue and wonder. A 70% of marketers know that this creation of intrigue and wonder is the way to engage and delight beyond the usual Christmas campaigns. 32% noted that engaging experiences can drive customer loyalty.

The interaction with the Christmas tree and the reindeer through AR creates serendipitous moments while the adoption of emerging technologies as a complement to previous efforts increases consumers’ engagement. Daily offers and the chance to take a selfie with the reindeers in different locations transforms this experience each time, making it score high in reciprocity.
Empathy

- Experiences need to be meaningful and connect emotionally with people
- Consumers have aspirations and desires for technologies to power social good

When marketers create commercial content, they aim to appeal to consumers' senses, even when they use traditional themes, such as 'cosy but busy family dinners' and they work to differentiate this message in order to catch the viewer's eye. The vast majority of Christmas campaigns talk to the heart rather than the brain by re-enacting loving stories to connect emotionally with people.

Memories that are attached to emotions are unforgettable, and that is what marketers want to achieve through adverts. 31% of those surveyed said the most effective way to grab the attention of consumers during Christmas is to tap into emotions.

The Christmas period is one of joy, cheerfulness and connections made and kept between people. Christmas adverts try to contain all those emotions in a 30 second clip. VR, AR and other emerging technologies allow these users to become the experiencer, to draw from personal experience and to feel emotion towards others. We measure empathy by looking at the positive emotions that campaigns create for consumers and the digital track they leave behind.

CREATING STANDARD CAMPAIGNS

68% of marketers believe that providing customers with experiences using emerging technologies such as VR and AR can help brands to stand out.
Marks & Spencer: Mrs Claus

- The advert aired for the first time on Channel 4 then online on Youtube, the Marks & Spencer website and in emails to the five million members of the Sparks loyalty programme.
- Mrs Claus is taking over the brand’s social media with the hashtag #lovemrsclaus along with a special emoji.
- An ‘army’ of Mrs Clauses in store will do random acts of kindness for the customers and for each one they donate £5 to charities.
- Alongside the main activity there will also be a “product layer” of advertising that is mobile-led in-line with people’s personal calendars and that aligns with Google searches.

Marks & Spencer is also utilising the empathy rule of engagement and surprising their customers by featuring Mrs Claus in a James Bond-like adventure. She is energetic, imaginative and owns a secret lair full of gadgets that she uses to reach a boy who needs a special gift for his sister.

As a response to the continuous decline of sales, the brand is using consumer feedback to gain insight on what they expect and desire from Marks & Spencer – the advert was a result of feedback from 15,000 customers surveyed every week who participate in the Sparks loyalty programme. These surveys uncovered needs, and a road of contemporary, sweet and humorous stories was followed. Empathy scores high in the new Mrs Claus advert allowing viewers to relate to the story – and is a form of social good. Mrs Claus is also a character that is well-known but usually silent, so the brand is providing a unique experience when turning the spotlight to her. This pleasant surprise is appreciated by the customer and makes the serendipitous moment worthwhile. In addition, Mrs Claus acts like the brand’s ambassador as she takes over their social media platforms, increasing engagement with consumers, while they are given the chance to use her hashtag and custom emojis.
To actually be able to live in the moment can make a good experience turn into a great one – in order to achieve this to the fullest you need to disconnect and silence the noise. Emerging technologies such as VR are able to offer just that to the user - when you step into the virtual world you close your eyes and open them to live a unique moment.

In a way, being disconnected actually makes you more connected, and as soon as brands realise that, we will see more use of such technology. 19% of marketers believe that technology can enable people to disconnect from the outside world and have a private, high-quality experience. Consumer findings also endorse this with 21% of respondents backing VR to be the biggest trend of 2017. John Lewis is indicative of this – by harnessing the power of Oculus Rift in-store, the harried shopper takes a moment for themselves and loses themselves in the process. This is creating private moments in public.

19% of marketers believe that technology can enable people to disconnect from the outside world and have a private, high-quality experience.

Privacy

- Future wearables will allow for more private, untraceable moments
- Brands will be challenged on how to connect with more empowered consumers (creating private moments in public)
Sainsbury’s: The Best Gift Is Me

- Feel good short film is the first to use 3D printed faces in animation production in the UK
- The song ‘The Greatest Gift for Christmas is Me’ is available to stream on Spotify
- Campaign launch in social media and Youtube
- ‘Christmas is for sharing’ - gingerbread Dave and film animation kits are sold to raise money for children’s charities

Sainsbury’s is indicative of the use of innovative technology to bring a private moment to life – that of an interaction between father and child – which fuses the tensions of the outward facing empathetic response with the inward facing realities of being a parent. Its stop motion musical advert stars Dave, a dad so busy that he doesn’t make it home to put his children to bed. He’s determined to spend more time with his family this year. The viewer, induced by 3D printing and stop motion production, is immersed in the set of challenges faced by many each day. They can empathise, and feel the difficulty and the desire to enact a new set of relationships.

The Sainsbury’s feature highlights the use of innovative emerging technologies including 3D printers and stop motion technology to bring a private moment to life. This is the technological investment from Sainsbury’s after drawing the empathy and humour of a more traditional but highly popular advert in 2015 with the adventures of the cat Mog.

Although not using obvious immersion approaches like VR, this campaign is highly notable in its attempt to make a very private relationship, need and desire, that of being a responsible, caring and present parent, come to life.
Adaptability

- Technology must understand customer context and intent as an enabler of experiences
- Organisations adapting and integrating technologies at all levels of planning and customer engagement

As defined in the *Future of Experience* report, being adaptive is about offering people more connected digital experiences and brands recognising that technology is not just a set of tools, but a portal to relevance and transformative customer experiences.

The days where brands showed only the aspects they wanted are long gone – nowadays extensive marketing research is done in an attempt to understand what consumers want to see, hear, touch and feel. This is the core of adaptability, being able to sense the world around you and act according to the given context. Technology plays a key role in this transformation effort, as it is also a big part of our daily lives.

Almost a third of marketers (30%) believe that emerging technologies provide the opportunity for learning more about customers and tailoring experiences to meet their needs and passions. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the use of AI to create responsive chat bots. The use of dark social media, Facebook messenger for example, provides truly traceable shares and engagement with brands.
eBay: ShopBot

- eBay's Holiday Hub is a place designed for giving gift ideas and providing the best deals
- The new chat bot personal shopping assistant is powered by AI: "The Gift They’re Waiting for Is Waiting on eBay"

Similarly, Ebay's Shopbot is powered by AI, providing the contextual understanding, predictive modelling, and machine learning abilities combined with the breadth of inventory from a seller. The process is also reciprocal and adaptive in that the AI learns from every interaction. Launching at Christmas gives it an ideal time to learn from the user as it slowly adapts, allowing the user to play a role in its training. An eBay representative suggests, "eBay ShopBot is powered by AI, it uses natural language to understand the user’s intent, and predictive modelling to know what best to recommend in each point in time. It also learns from the interaction with you and gets better over time".

eBay, a pioneer of e-commerce, is known for using data-led insights to uncover trends and buying patterns so that they can offer the best service to their loyal customers and attract new ones. eBay is now combining the power of its inventory with a wide selection of small and more personalised companies along with big brands and the use of cutting edge technologies to provide a new experience in shopping.

This year eBay launched the eBay ShopBot on Facebook Messenger, which is a personal assistant powered by AI tech, providing a personalised experience and assistance while shopping for the perfect gift through friendly chat.

Trust and authenticity build slowly as the e-commerce brand uses the AI infused chatbot to offer moments of discovery to the users, as they browse for the perfect gift during this holiday season. Personalisation is highly valued by consumers and eBay responds to this need with a personal shopping assistant which uses natural language processing to communicate and help the jolly shoppers.

eBay’s entry into AI powered bots at Christmas is an example of the transformation of experience to the outside in, looking to engage consumers’ deepest desires to create the most meaningful interaction. As eBay’s representative puts it, "We’ve seen that AI has the potential to dramatically reshape the online shopping experience, with breakthrough merchandising and personalised shopping. Paired with the power and reach of cloud computing, commerce can take place where you want it and when you want it. Combined with eBay’s inventory and knowledge-base we see something really exciting and transformative taking hold. Online shopping will be as easy as talking to a friend".
Asda: Christmas Made Better

- The brand used targeted data to predict and deliver the right messages at the right time – it’s consumer-centric
- TV ads run alongside digital executions (though it’s difficult to understand how)
- The campaign includes social media where James Martin, the brand ambassador shares his favourite story and will provide cooking tips

Another example of a brand campaign that uses adaptability is Asda’s Christmas Made Better campaign. All about anticipation, the campaign takes two areas of current thinking into consideration:

1. the concept of ‘moments’ as enablers of meaningful experiences and
2. transforming from the outside in through consumer response

It uses data-led insights to steer the campaign and deliver moments through 22 adverts that capture 26 different moments during the festive period. The experiences are precisely timed to meet spikes in activity monitored over the period. It is an excellent example of the rule of adaptability by using emerging technologies to understand customer context and intent to act as an enabler of experiences.
Advertising relies on repetition – the first time you watch an advert, you get all the initial feelings, the second time you contemplate and then you see iterations to remind you that it is still there. Marketers have known this and have used it adequately, but now technology has the ability to learn from the user and create more personalised content so that repetition becomes fun. Consumers come back for more and get a chance to familiarise themselves with technology in the process.

The use of chat bots in the Coca-Cola Christmas truck campaign will teach the machine the required responses, creating a baseline of training through which the machine learns. This is an ideal way to respond to the thousands of queries that the brand is sure to get and each query will result in an update of the parameters through which the AI engine responds. The potential smart analytics of the bot then re-introduces a set of insights to the brand and a reciprocal, cyclical relationship is formed. In an effort to make the customer experience quicker, more agile and more correct, Coca-Cola is introducing a powerful engine that will no doubt change the face of #HolidaysAreComing.

“Creating a meaningful experience is the first step towards a good marketing strategy; repeating the act is what will make the difference.”

Reciprocity

- Technology needs to provide experiences that are helpful, practical, personal and progressive to encourage repeat use
- Knowing how to interpret the data machines give us will be a fundamental skill of the future
Movie-like adverts are a common theme this year – high production value, highly recognisable actors, emotional music, big-name directors – we see a common theme among many brands. Technological developments certainly allow such productions, but even where they are not necessarily linking to emerging technologies such as VR, AR and personalisation tools, they encourage ‘repeat use’ by providing progressive messaging and inciting people to share their experience of the movie. It is, in effect, a different way to consider reciprocity, but one that is equally useful.

**ATTRACTING NEW CUSTOMERS**

52%

More than half of marketers (52%) surveyed believe using emerging technologies helps attract new customers of experiences can have an impact.
**Notonthehighstreet.com: Magic is Real**

- The elf theme continues online via an ‘Elf Help’ gift service which runs through Facebook Messenger, creating a dark social experience.
- There is also a bespoke ‘Elf Collection’ on the website, featuring 25 unique products, created in collaboration with notonthehighstreet.com partners.

Notonthehighstreet.com’s Christmas campaign is also an example of how reciprocity is an important element when it comes to engaging consumers. ‘Magic is Real’, its documentary-style advert, promotes custom-designed gifts in a Santa’s factory-like set where a wise elf admits, ‘There is no perfect gift. Only a gift perfect for someone’. The brand intends to nudge consumers into supporting small businesses that can offer personalised hand crafted gifts instead of mass produced creations.

This campaign indicated reciprocity as a means to engaging new forms of experience: the meshing of a simple, but effective ad bringing the creator and maker of goods to the front of the narrative. This is alongside a personalised and helpful elf via messenger, so together proved “experiences that are helpful, practical, personal and progressive”. A small amount of serendipity never hurts and while it is certainly here in its message (as well as some empathy towards those small inventors that make these goods), notonthehighstreet still benefits from its 2015 ‘Not Christmas’ campaign in its attempt to replace mass-produced gifts with authentic and heart-warming unique moments.

This blend of empathy with adaptability and reciprocity appeals to the deepest sense of connectivity and evokes the empathetic feeling of giving a gift when you know you’ve got it so right for that individual.
The magic of the gift – when you know you got that gift right and you got it so right for that individual because of the thought that you have put into – it was the starting point. So if we were thinking about the one gift among everything and you say ‘I’ve got that for me, that is the thing that I really wanted for her’ that is the purpose of Notonthehighstreet. It is going to enable you to gift more thoughtfully to really think about the individual connecting to that desire in the moment.

*Hannah Webley-Smith*, Customer Director, Notonthehighstreet says
Conclusion

Key Findings

• 2016 sees the arrival of experienced-focused Christmas campaigns that harness the power of digital, technology and data insight

• The trend towards ‘conversational commerce’ using AI-powered chatbots bring adaptability and reciprocity into the spotlight this Christmas

• Empathy remains a key ingredient to the Christmas message, both in drawing on personal experience to promote a sense of belonging and care, as well as creating opportunities for charitable responses

• Emerging technologies like VR bring serendipity to life in the most joyful way, harnessing the desire of consumers to feel good about life and themselves at the Christmas season

• It is equally ‘private’ to bring private struggles to the public realm as it is to help people immerse themselves in a private moment
68% of marketers believe that providing customers with experiences using emerging
technologies such as VR and AR can help brands to stand out. Personalisation is also
important – 16% said this is one of the most effective ways to get the attention of
consumers. This number is certainly set to grow as companies move towards responsive
AI chatbots and personalisation of recommendations as we see with Notonthehighstreet.
com, eBay and Coca-Cola.

Covent Garden's AR Reindeer, jumping on a virtual trampoline at John Lewis and playing
Waitrose's interactive game to get the robin home create opportunities for deeper
consumer engagement with brands at Christmas. They harness the joy and delight of the
season, making Christmas fun and engaging, and bring consumers out to the location to
share in the momentum and excitement. The use of chat bots, on the other hand, allow
consumers to stay home and shop – engaging them in a more personalised experience
where brands meet the private needs of shoppers.

The use of AI is certainly growing in attraction. All of these allow marketers to bring the
festive season to life in innovative ways as 39% of our respondents suggest. It is early days
in the future of experience but already over a quarter (27%) of marketers believe that it is
important to include elements of it.

Product-focused campaigns of the past are replaced by experience-focused messages,
either through interactive opportunities, games or in store immersive experiences.
The human element remains central, serendipity and empathy are of course key in the
Christmas message, and technology provides the chance to engage with these feelings.
Equally, technology allows you to stay home and still experience delight and surprise
through hyper-media infused advert campaigns and AI chatbot technologies.

Notably, in previous years we saw a much wider use of augmented reality. We do still
see the use of AR, in particular in the current Covent Garden Where’s Rudolph campaign
but not as widespread. We imagine a return to AR, particularly in relation to the ‘getting
outside’ factor of current games. Immersion technologies like VR are fantastic but costly,
leaving these to the large brands like John Lewis. Lasting beyond Christmas is the creation
of a responsive bot implementation like that of Notonthehighstreet (Christmas elf) and
Ebay’s Shopbot. Both will engage the consumer at a time of intense buying and then
provide data and usefulness over time.

Integrating elements of sociability, especially at Christmas, for example, deepens the
linking power of the brand, creating strong relationships and encouraging customers to
respond. Thinking changes, creativity becomes possible and experience is adaptive and
reciprocal. Experience is deeply personal, we look now to bring forth experience from
within ourselves into the world and brands must respond, rather than the other way
around. Consumers are creative, innovative and productive themselves: brands need
to find ways to bring these human factors out into the open. Many of these Christmas
campaigns stand out as providing inroads into this new way of evolving consumer
experience.
Acknowledgements

The Future of Experience at Christmas is a research collaboration between Adobe and researchers in the Institute of Management Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. The project aims to explore the impact emerging technologies are having on creating meaningful Christmas experiences - both offline and online - and better understand the experiential intersections of marketers, technology and the Christmas message. The research was directed by Dr Chris Brauer and led by Dr Jennifer Barth with research assistance from Alexia Samara.

Methodology

The research used qualitative methods to capture how a selection of brands bring Christmas experience to life. The methods include literature and desk research, conceptual walking tours of campaigns and interviews with subject matter experts. This is complemented by two online surveys: one survey of amongst a sample of 502 adults working in marketing across a number of industries, and a consumer survey of 2,192 nationally representative adults aged 18 or older. All figures for the quantitative studies are from YouGov Plc. Fieldwork was undertaken between 18th-22nd November 2016 (marketers) and 25th-28th November 2016 (consumers). The surveys were carried out online. The consumer survey figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+). The marketer survey figures are from a sample of UK adults (aged 18+) working in marketing.

The case studies within this report have been chosen for creating the opportunity for great experiences to happen. Each use case includes a pie chart and discussion about its key properties of the five rules of engagement: Empathy, Serendipity, Privacy, Reciprocity, and Adaptability. We provide pie chart breakdowns of the relative amount of each of the five rules of engagement per each use case - these are not quantitative productions but rather qualitative conceptual mapping based on the research. To achieve this we broke down each rule of engagement into two definitions. We take each use case and identify out of 10 points to what extent the campaign promotes each definition of the dimensions in a meaningful way. Where the scores are very high versus those that are low, we provide a conceptual map of the most significant and then less so areas of engagement for experience.

Methodology

Names and titles of the Subject Matter Experts interviewed

- Imola Gaspar, Community Manager and Social communication at Coca-Cola
- eBay representative
- Hannah Webley-Smith, Customer Director, Notonthehighstreet.com
- John Watton, EMEA Marketing Director, Adobe
References

1. Interview with Imola Gaspar, 25 November 2016


4. Interview with eBay representative, November 2016

5. Interview with eBay representative, November 2016

6. Interview with Hannah Webley-Smith, Notonthehighstreet.com, November 2016
References


For more information:
Website: www.adobe.com/uk
Blog: blogs.adobe.com/digitaleurope/
Twitter: @adobemktgcloud