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FIVE LAST MINUTE FESTIVE TIPS FOR RETAILERS





The season of big spending is upon us and it's the most important time of year for both online and offline retailers.

As such, refining your search marketing strategy during the festive season is important for encouraging your website visitors to buy from you, rather than your competitors.

CONTENTS

- 3 TOP THEIR WISHLIST**
- 5 FOLLOW YOUR STARS**
- 7 CREATE SOME BUZZ & SPARKLE AROUND YOUR BRAND**
- 11 DON'T LET YOUR SHOPPING CARTS GET LONELY THIS CHRISTMAS**
- 13 TRIED AND TRUSTED TRADITIONS**



TOP THEIR WISHLIST

It takes time to see improvements in your organic search visibility (ie, where you appear in the search results when someone searches for terms related to your business); this type of optimisation (also known as SEO) takes a consistent and structured year-round strategy.

But people who search are a particularly valuable audience. According to Google, they're 1.5 times more likely to buy than those who don't: they know exactly what they're looking for and are already at the buying stage. People who search during the holidays are also much more likely to buy than those who search at other times of the year:

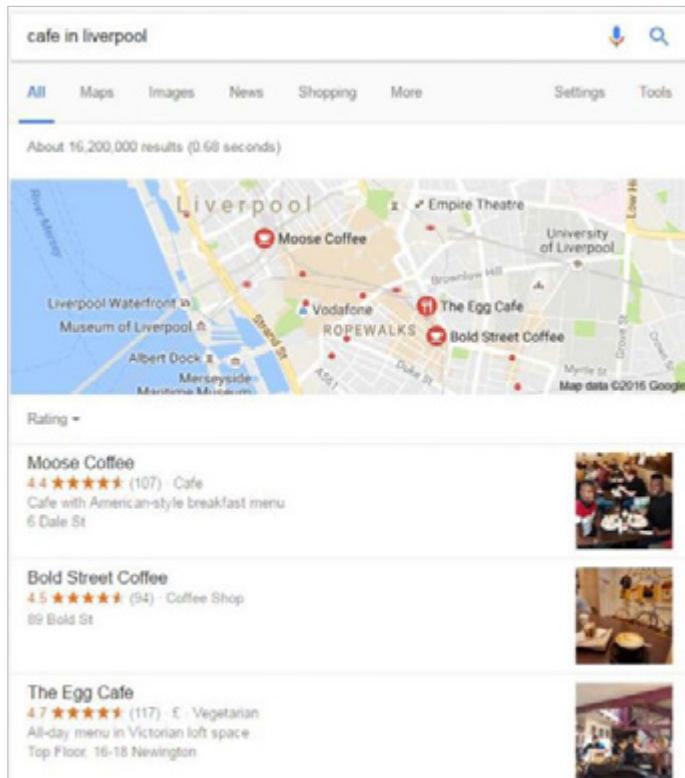


Conversion rate of digital shoppers (Source: Think With Google)

However, there are steps you can take to ensure your site is optimised for local organic search queries.

Local SEO is a technique which makes it quick and easy for customers in your area to find your business online when searching organically. Every business that relies on local customers visiting their bricks-and-mortar premises needs to incorporate local SEO into their search marketing strategy, as an increasing number of customers are using mobile devices to search for specific, nearby businesses on the go.

To perform well in local search results, you must adhere to traditional [SEO best practice](#) as per any standard campaign; however there a number of unique components that are aligned towards [local SEO](#).



An example of local organic search results from Google

You still have time to maximise returns from your PPC ad campaigns

Paid search campaigns are quick to implement, easy to track or amend and have the potential to yield immediate results.

Optimise your campaigns. You can review daily performance metrics and adjust the settings in your account at any time during a campaign to ensure your ads are targeting the right people at the right time. You may also want to review and tweak your ads' wording to emphasise their relevancy to potential users, paying particular attention to headlines and calls-to-action.

Ensure you are following basic paid search best practices – [download our free beginner's guide](#) to help you to this.

Review recent performance. Christmas inevitably brings an increase in cart abandons. Combat this by identifying terms that are converting and have good costs per acquisitions (CPAs), and ensure that you are using exact match bids on them to increase control over budgets. Similarly, root out terms that have spent a significant amount of budget, delivered few conversions and high CPAs, and optimise against them by adding them to your negative keyword list.

Have a backup campaign. If you have top sellers, monitor stock levels and ensure you have a backup campaign ready to be deployed in your AdWords account in the event of a stock shortage. You can read more about paid search optimisation techniques [here](#).



FOLLOW YOUR STARS

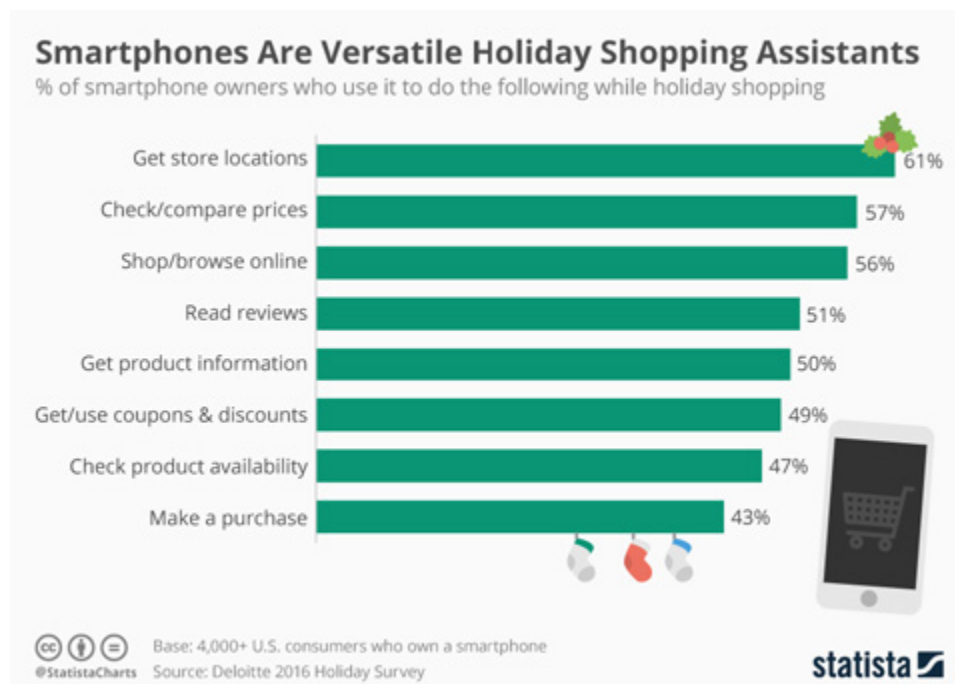
Think of your customers as stars who shine particularly brightly for your business at Christmas. Focus on a personalised approach to show them you value their loyalty, and to capitalise on the increased profit potential of the festive period.

Be where they are - think multi device

With more people than ever using mobile devices to do their Christmas shopping, if your online strategy isn't already [optimised for mobile devices](#), then you need to start as soon as possible.

According to [Deloitte's 2016 Holiday Survey](#), 78% of smartphone owners plan to use their device while doing their festive shopping. Thankfully for physical retailers, finding their way to a bricks-and-mortar store is the most popular activity among these customers.

This is backed up Google stats reveal that consumers are increasingly turning to mobile as a “door-to-the-store”, with 76% of people search for something nearby on their smartphone visiting a related business within a day. Conversion rate is good, with [28% of those searches](#) resulting in a purchase.



Personalise their ad experience

One of the advantages of paid search (PPC) has always been the ability to reach a highly relevant and targeted audience, resulting in a tightly focused ad and increased likelihood of conversion (either by a visitor making a purchase or by visiting your bricks-and-mortar store).

It also allows you to target specific geographic areas with location-based advertising. In our increasingly mobile climate, that's particularly useful when targeting an audience who are likely to be out and about making last minute festive purchases and arrangements – especially if your business operates locally or is limited to a certain location.

Areas that your business doesn't service can be excluded, too. For instance, if your business is based on direct home delivery, you can automatically exclude areas that are outside of your delivery radius.

You can also dynamically adjust your ad copy based on a visitor's location, which offers a powerful opportunity to personalise them – particularly when combined with the ability to use mobile specific copy.

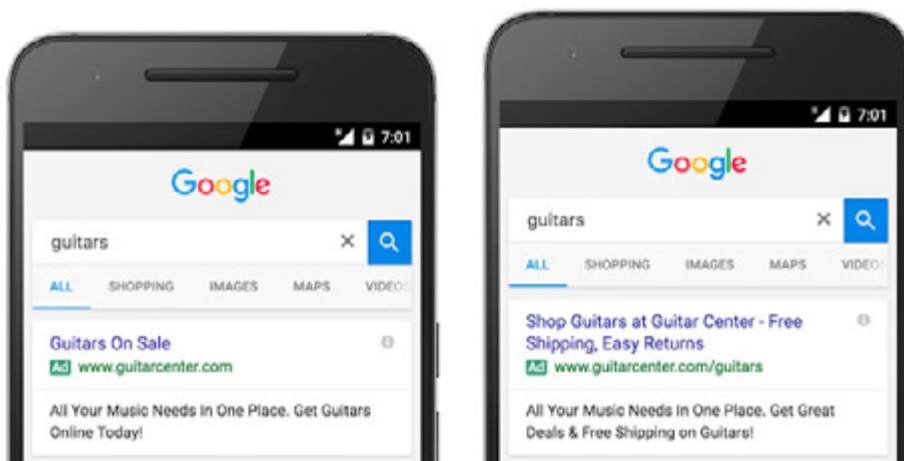
Using publically available information, such as Government figures or local surveys, there's no reason you couldn't have highly personalised ads such as:

“Order your last minute gifts by 15th December for free delivery to CH66”

Or

“31% of people in SW15 received an unwanted gift last Christmas; this year, buy them something good”

Google has made 'expanded text ads' available, designed for a mobile-first world with both users and advertisers in mind. This gives you a little more freedom and displays a more comprehensive ad to the user (see the example below).



Standard text ad

Expanded text ad



3. CREATE SOME BUZZ & SPARKLE AROUND YOUR BRAND

A time for sharing

Social media now plays a vital role in influencing customers' festive buying decisions. Studies suggest that almost half of internet shoppers check a brand's social media before buying, while 30% of online shoppers say they've made a purchase as a result of seeing a company's post.



It's also the perfect tool for telling, developing and spreading your brand's story to capture customers' attention – and wallets – with the aim of growing sales both in-store and online. This is an effective year-round strategy, but can be particularly successful during the festive period. If you have built a rapport with users and they can trust your brand, it's likely they will be more interested in what you have to offer when they reach the buying phase of the sales funnel.

While the main social media platforms - Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn - are great for reaching out to your customers, don't forget to build your online presence on image-centric networks such as Pinterest and Instagram, too. These are great platforms for showcasing new or discounted products to your customers and prospects and encouraging shares.

It's important to review your social presence regularly – and frequently at peak periods for your business – to ensure that the message you're sending to customers aligns with the rest of your marketing channels.

Don't be afraid to get in the Christmas spirit and have fun with your posts.

Consider social advertising

Social media advertising (paid social media) can be an effective way to amplify your other social and advertising activities, so now could be the time to invest some of your advertising budget into social platforms.

Over recent years, social platforms have broadened their appeal to marketers by allowing them to interact with followers like a native user; by encouraging branded content and by offering more sophisticated advertising options in the form of promoted posts, native and video ads; and, most recently, 'buy it now' buttons.

The perceived value among marketers is on the rise: the number of advertisers viewing social ads and promoted posts as effective leapt by 20% and 30% respectively between Q4 2014 and Q4 2015, research by the [Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs](#) found.

Meanwhile, social users themselves say sponsored social messages are "equally—if not more—effective as other types of marketing tactics", according to data analysis by [eMarketer](#); this showed that platforms like Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram ranked higher than more traditional tactics such as print ads, with TV commercials the only non-social/non-digital medium in the top ten.

Our eBook will help you to explore the paid opportunities available to place your content in front of the audience that matters to you most this festive season.



Sponsored ads on Instagram

Sending your best wishes

Email marketing is an enduringly effective way to reach out to your audience and drive quality leads to your business, offering one of the highest average ROIs available across industries:

The [DMA UK](#) (formerly the Direct Marketing Association) found that email marketing has an ROI of **3800%**, - that's a return of £38 for every £1 spent.

Throughout the build-up to the most notable days in the retail calendar, build hype around your campaigns with a targeted email marketing strategy.

Some useful tactics for getting most of email this festive season:

Create a sense of urgency. The fear of missing out can be a potent motivator to take action and is known as the scarcity principle. Create excitement and a feeling of immediacy with limited edition products. Highlight closing or end date for offers.

Countdown. One of the prime drivers of sales traffic (of any kind) is the limited lifespan of offers, so make the most of it with a countdown, create a bit of pressure and drive customers toward the checkout.

Differentiate. Unsurprisingly, yours will not be the only brand in your niche competing for Christmas shoppers. It is therefore a must that you highlight your USP – put it front and centre on your landing pages, whether it's free delivery or additional warranties, let your visitors know the reasons they should choose you over your competition.

To the right is an example of a great email from clothing retailer Asos:

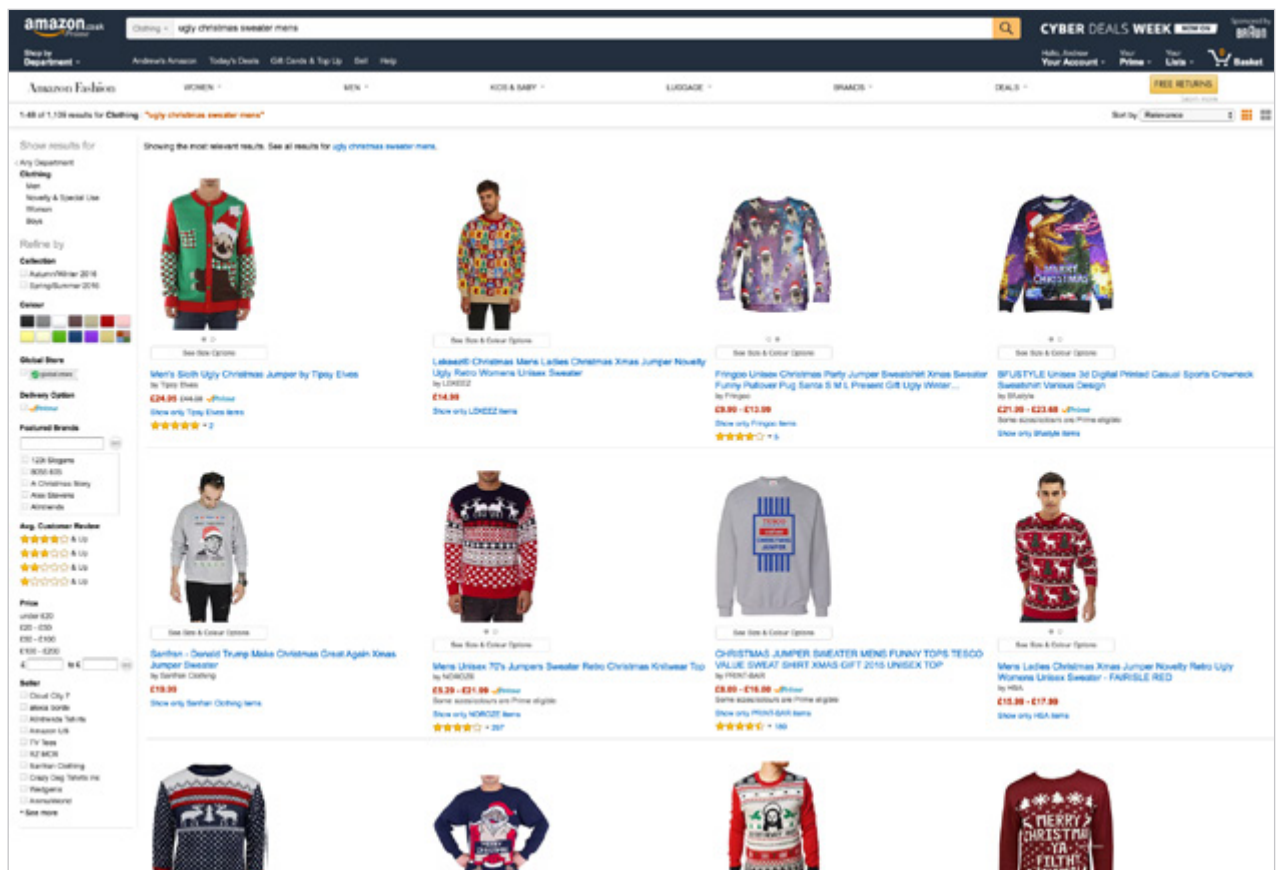
The layout of this Christmas email allows Asos to fit in a lot of content - and showcase a lot of products - without looking cluttered, while the copy is original and engaging.



Characteristics of a great marketing email

- Snappy subject line that grabs attention
- Targeting/personalisation
- Content: relevant and straight to the point
- Readable layout & format
- Strong call to action (including an 'unsubscribe' option, which is a legal requirement in most countries)
- Eye-catching visuals
- A little bit extra that delivers real value - such as a discount code or special offer
- Timing - According to Kissmetrics, the optimal email sending frequency is generally 1 to 4 emails a month, but you should be guided by your own data analysis.

Don't forget landing pages: they should have the same message, look and feel as the email marketing that drove the visit, as well as a prominent call to action.





DON'T LET YOUR SHOPPING CARTS GET LONELY THIS CHRISTMAS

Customers demand reliability

58% of shoppers in a survey by [Retail Week](#) say a well-designed, easy-to-use website is one of the top three factors that will influence them to spend with a particular retailer online (behind price and quality).

Test the functionality of your website from a customer's point-of-view

Pay particular attention to loading times, and shopping cart and checkout experiences - these are notorious points where customers can become frustrated and ditch your site. Ensure the functionality of your servers at high load.

Cut 'abandoned basket' rates with retargeting ads

As shoppers flit between your website and your competitors' sites to compare prices during the cash-splashing season, there's an increased chance that they will abandon their baskets on your site. An abandoned basket refers to when a user adds an item to their virtual basket on your eCommerce site, but doesn't go ahead and purchase the item within a specified time frame. So, how do you convert that website visitor into a customer?


You can set up a retargeting ad campaign for your website this shopping season to discourage your prospects from forgetting about your brand and purchasing from your competitors instead.

A retargeting campaign allows you to 'follow' that website visitor across the web with targeted ads based upon the product(s) they've shown interest in, enticing them to click back onto your website and proceed to purchase. According to [Shopify](#), online retailers lose 68% of sales due to shopping cart abandonment.

However, [VWO's survey on eCommerce](#) revealed that retargeting ads can convert an average of 54% of those abandoned baskets into sales when the product is offered again at a discounted price.

If you're interested in going down the retargeting route, download our [remarketing cheat sheet](#) to read about it in more depth.

... And make sure those presents get under the tree



According to a [recent survey](#) by Channel Advisor, businesses' biggest concern around the festive period is logistics/delivery. There are few experiences more disappointing for customers than gifts that fail to arrive in time for Christmas morning.

A key player in the rapid growth of eCommerce, 'click + collect', which has now formed an integral role in the consumer shopping cycle, and is definitely a functionality to consider. According to the IMRG Index, the ability to purchase and reserve items online before collecting in store now accounts for around 25% of multi-channel retailers' sales.

The services are now relatively cost effective to implement, and the speed of consumer take-up suggests it is a channel that is here to stay. With a rising number of click + collect' services on the market for businesses to choose from (including this offering from the [Post Office](#)) other advantages for retailers operating online include flexibility, ease of implementation, and the ability to integrate returns and redelivery into one solution.

According to a [report by BCSC](#), despite some of the challenges presented by click + collect models, "it is a perfect example of combining the best of clicks and bricks, and should be embraced by the retail industry".



5. TRIED AND TRUSTED TRADITIONS

Here are two examples of two big brand Christmas marketing campaigns that went viral, and what you can learn from their success.

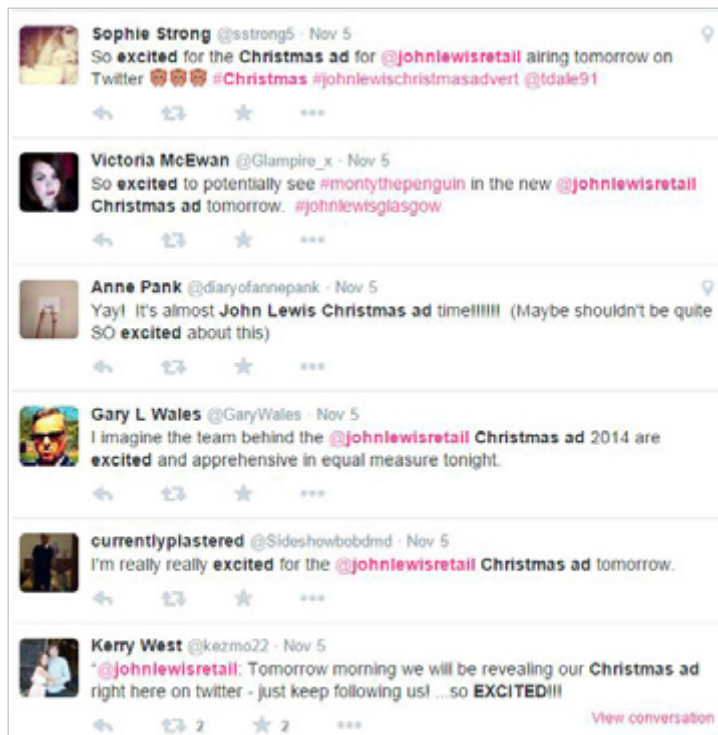
CASE STUDY 1: JOHN LEWIS - MONTY THE PENGUIN

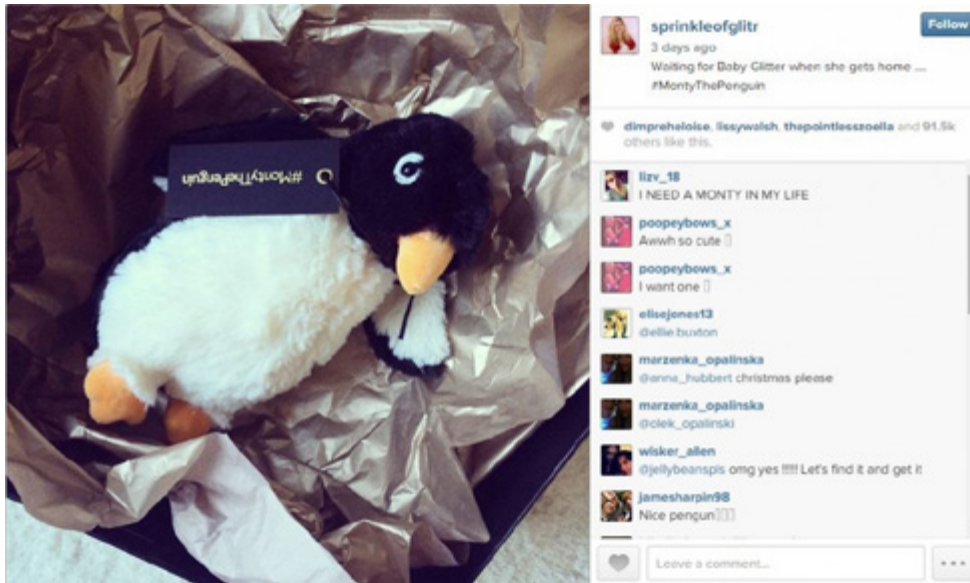
The much-hyped John Lewis Christmas ad has become as much of a tradition as mince pies and horrible jumpers.

John Lewis's 2014 Monty the Penguin ad became their most successful ever. Just 90 minutes after the advert first graced our screens, it was trending on Twitter in the UK. Within ten hours, the ad had been viewed over 1.25 million times on YouTube. Then the retailer's plush Monty the Penguin toy ended up being listed on eBay accompanied by a whopping £499 price tag, due to such high demand. That's integration of online and offline marketing at its finest.

Steal John Lewis's strategy

Build hype: Before Monty the Penguin took the social media world by storm, John Lewis showcased mysterious Monty the Penguin adverts on the London Underground and published teasers across social media to get fans excited about its latest Christmas ad. It worked...





Blogger outreach: To help create hype around the Christmas campaign, John Lewis implemented a blogger outreach strategy, sending Monty the Penguin toys to influential fashion, beauty and lifestyle bloggers. In turn, the bloggers started tweeting using the #MontyThePenguin hashtag, which spread the message to their large, engaged audiences. Soon, Monty the Penguin toys were cropping up all over social...

Make the most of social media: John Lewis took advantage of its readily engaged social media following, premiering the Monty ad on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Google+.

Strong branding: After the launch of the Christmas advert, the John Lewis website and social media accounts were rebranded to reflect the Christmas campaign.

Less is more: Subtlety was key to this campaign – there was no hard sell, no John Lewis products being pushed in front of you - just a simple, heart-warming story. Ultimately, this strategy quietly positioned John Lewis as the go-to Christmas shopping destination in 2014.

CASE STUDY 2: ALDI - KEVIN THE CARROT

There's no poignant twist in this 2016 campaign from budget supermarket Aldi, who aim instead for humour and parody. Kevin desperately wants to end up with Father Christmas and Rudolph rather than becoming part of the Christmas dinner. Will he achieve his dream and experience a Christmas miracle?



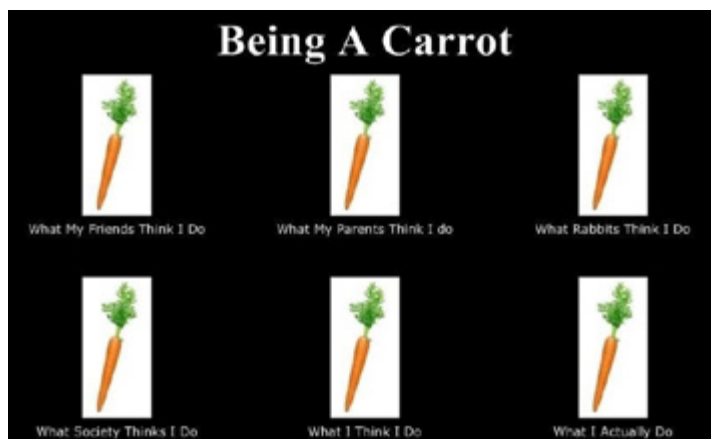
Steal Aldi's strategy

Extended story-telling: Kevin's story didn't end with the first advert. The story started with an ad in which Kevin embarked on a 'dangerous quest' across a table laden with Christmas food, so that he can reach the mince pie he's spotted has been left out for Father Christmas hoping that he, too, will end up on the sleigh. This leaves viewers to wonder what will become of the loveable legume.

Sense of humour: Aldi affectionately mocked the schmaltz surrounding the anticipation before John Lewis's annual ad by releasing a clip of Kevin getting so excited about the department store's Christmas advert that he even begins to hyperventilate (see still below). Connecting with customers on an emotional level by making them laugh is a powerful way to drive engagement emotionally driven content is more likely to be shared with others.



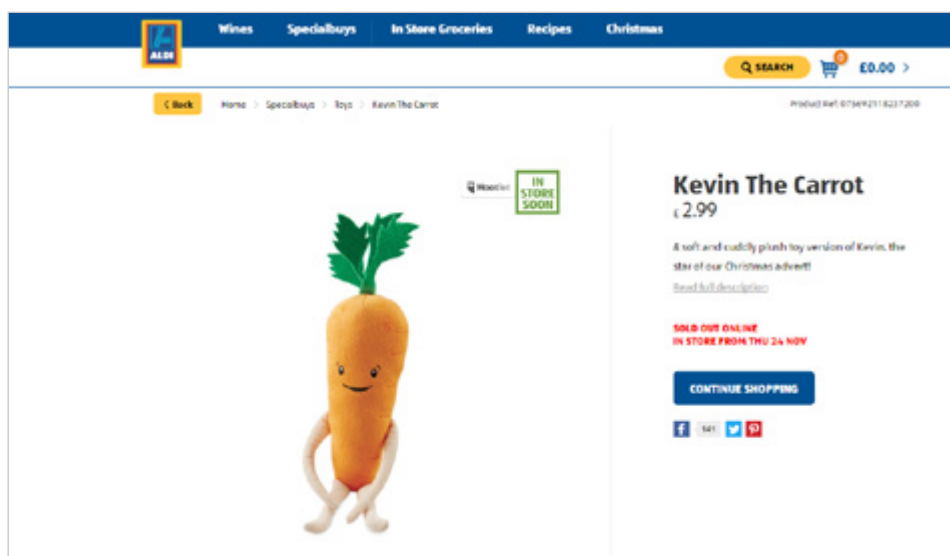
Social media: Kevin had his own Twitter account, which documented his day-to-day life and of course, his ongoing quest to experience a Christmas miracle. He also keeps his fans coming back by interacting with their comments, making silly jokes and posting amusing memes.





Online and offline marketing: Aldi integrated online and offline marketing seamlessly. Alongside the obvious online activities, the brand continued to build hype offline too, with a limited edition Kevin the Carrot soft toy, which was an immediate sell-out.

Know your audience: Aldi's campaign showcases the supermarket as a fun company that cares about and understands its customers, who might be cynical about the John Lewis hype and sentimentality and looking for something simpler – much like the no-nonsense tone of the Kevin ads.



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ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO): and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year 2018, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

YOUR BESPOKE ORGANIC SEARCH (SEO) ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

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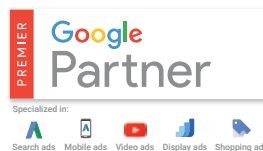
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