


Lessons from Walmart, Coca-Cola on what makes an engaging holiday ad

Article



'Tis the season for a deluge of holiday ads. To break through the noise, brands need to zero in on what resonates with consumers—and maybe even have a little fun.

Here are four holiday ad campaigns that have caught our eye.

1. Walmart

The campaign: [Walmart's Black Friday Deals campaign](#) reunites “Mean Girls” stars Lindsay Lohan, Lacey Chabert, and Amanda Seyfried as grown-up versions of the characters they played in the cult classic.

The spot also features cameos from other cast members including Rajiv Surendra, who played Kevin Gnapoor in the original movie, and Daniel Franzese, who played Damian, as well as Missy Elliott, whose song “Pass That Dutch” was featured in the film.

Why it works: Like Mattel with the “Barbie” movie or [Forever 21's Juicy Couture line](#), the campaign appeals to consumers’ sense of nostalgia (particularly millennials, who plan to spend more than every other generation this holiday season, per PwC). But it’s not just nostalgia driving the “Mean Girls” madness: The trailer for the movie version of the “Mean Girls” musical just hit, which could mean Walmart’s campaign will resonate with other excited viewers.

2. The Coca-Cola Co.

The campaign: [Coca-Cola's The World Needs More Santas](#) opens on a city of Santas that are always helping each other out. But about halfway through the ad, the Santas are replaced with normal citygoers, illustrating how people’s “inner Santa” can come through as they perform acts of kindness.

Why it works: Coca-Cola is widely recognized for popularizing the image of Santa Claus we know and love today, so it makes sense that it would lean on that imagery for holiday campaigns. But more importantly, the ad “makes a statement” without mentioning any controversial topics, which, [as we've learned from Bud Light](#), can backfire.

3. Ocean Spray

The campaign: The [Power Your Party spot from Ocean Spray](#) is one of this year’s more bizarre holiday ads. The campaign features what looks like a boring party spiced up by someone pouring Ocean Spray cranberry juice into a punch bowl. The juice creates a whirlpool motion in the bowl, which is mimicked by party guests while electronic dance music plays in the background.

Why it works: The absurdist humor is perfect for engaging younger consumers, especially Gen Z. It’s the kind of commercial that people can watch over and over again (as evidenced by

the YouTube comments) and share with friends just because it's entertaining—great for building brand awareness.

4. Etsy

The campaign: **Etsy's Your Mission campaign** plays on the impossible task of finding the perfect holiday gift for loved ones. One spot highlights a father trying to find gifts for twins with different tastes. Another shows a daughter finding the perfect thing to get her father that “doesn't want more stuff.” Each ad features the “Mission: Impossible” theme, which gives them a touch of comedy and drama.

Why it works: Though Etsy's 2024 US retail marketplace ecommerce sales (\$8.51 billion) will be just a fraction of Amazon's (\$326.35 billion) or eBay's (\$35.02 billion), this campaign could help the brand distinguish itself from other marketplaces by highlighting its unique and personalized products.

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