

Samsonite campaign looks to spread joy in anticipation of travel's resurgence

ARTICLE

Rimma Kats

The travel industry has suffered unlike any other during the coronavirus pandemic. Every aspect of the industry, from airlines, to hotels, to travel retailers, has had to halt much of its operations and marketing as a majority of consumers around the world shelter in place.

Luggage brand Samsonite is hoping to evoke some nostalgia in the meantime by reminding consumers of the joys of travel. We recently spoke with David Oksman, head of marketing and ecommerce at Samsonite, about the brand's recent campaign, "The Travel Is a Gift," and what the brand has in store for 2021.

Tell us about the campaign.

This campaign was really about evoking two feelings. The first was nostalgia—missing the experience of travel overall. And the second was optimism or hope for what 2021 can bring, which is a resurgence of travel.

What channels are you leveraging to get the word out about this effort?

Social networks like Facebook and Instagram, as well as YouTube and some TV advertising. On Facebook and Instagram, we're inviting our consumers to engage with the ad itself. We're asking them to tag the people they're most excited to travel with next year, who they're most excited to see or go on adventures with. We're trying to make it something through which people can engage and connect with others.

Is this the first big campaign that Samsonite has done since the beginning of the pandemic?

Yes, it's definitely the biggest thing we've gotten behind since the pandemic started. We did smaller digital activations around how to be safe and how to leverage our products differently than how they were meant to be used—for example, using our products at home for workouts. But this is definitely the first time we've come back out with a message that is more forward-looking, beyond the scope of the pandemic.

That's interesting, using luggage as workout equipment. Many marketers certainly had to think outside the box, especially in the early stages of the pandemic.

Exactly. We were trying to hit home with a range of messages: letting consumers know that when it's safe again to travel, we'll be there for them; inviting them to be nostalgic and reminisce about past travel; and showing them how to leverage the products in unique ways. That was phase one.

Over the summer, we transitioned into phase two, which was about localized movement and road-tripping, and how to use [our products] safely. We started producing ads with face masks in them, making the ads more realistic to the consumer. And now I feel we're in phase three, where some people are moving more again locally. I actually just saw the TSA numbers [for the week of] Thanksgiving, and over a million people moved through airports [on some days]. It's pretty significant to see the slow improvement in travel overall.

We're nearing the holidays. What is Samsonite working on?

A lot more people are shopping digitally. We are seeing great success in formats like buy online, pick up in-store (BOPIS), and supporting those sorts of initiatives. Then again, we're leveraging this campaign to reach a lot of consumers who are not as familiar with Samsonite—to help them emotionally connect with us and recognize that we have a shared value, which is a passion for a travel and movement, and even if it's not for today, it will be for 2021.

We've also seen this acceleration in ecommerce over the past few months. Do you anticipate it sticking?

Digital continues to be a critical part of our success, a very important part of our engine, and definitely something that we know is going to be critical to our brand. It's actually Samsonite's 110th anniversary this year. It's pretty wild. Our brand has never stopped evolving. Since 1910, we've constantly been innovating in the market. We made it through world wars, through depressions, through so many things, and one way we've made it through is by recognizing how important it is to create this celebration of travel with our consumers.

What does Samsonite have planned for 2021?

There are going to be some really incredible moments for the travel category in 2021. We've got some great product innovation coming. I can't say too much about it at this point, but it will play into the changing landscape of what consumers will be looking for in the year to come.