

MARKETING EXCELLENCE

ASOS

Breaking new ground with
social media marketing

headline sponsor



Foreword

By Amanda Mackenzie

What is marketing excellence?



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Marketing excellence can drive breakthrough business results for the short and long-term. Marketing excellence requires great strategic thinking, great creative thinking and perfect execution.

But how do we assess marketing excellence? First we choose brilliant industry judges who are all experienced and successful practitioners of excellence and we ask them to pick out the cases which they see as remarkable. We ask them to look for two key qualities from our winners: creativity and effectiveness.

But marketing continuously changes and evolves, as consumers become more sophisticated and demanding and the media for communicating with them ever more diverse. So the standards for marketing excellence change and in turn become more demanding.

We believe that The Marketing Society Awards for Excellence in association with Marketing set the standard of marketing excellence in the UK.

They have established this reputation over a period of more than 28 years, and they have always been based on the principle of searching out the best examples of different marketing techniques in action, that showcase great strategic thinking, great creativity and perfect execution.

In order to be a winner of one of the Society's Awards, marketers have to demonstrate that what they have done is outstanding in comparison with marketing in all industries not just their own particular sector.

If a marketing story has been good enough to impress our judges, then all marketers can learn from it – however senior they have become. The collection of case histories brought together here is the best of the best from the past two years of our Awards, and I am confident that it truly demonstrates marketing excellence. As you read these case studies I hope you are inspired by them and impressed at the talent and expertise in our profession which created them.

ASOS

Breaking new ground with social media marketing

Snapshot

Engaging with its target audience through an integrated social media strategy saw online fashion retailer ASOS enjoy its best Christmas ever.

Key insights

- ASOS developed its newly-developed social media strategy around three ambitious objectives: boost sales, deepen brand engagement and encourage advocacy.
- The key insight— that for its 20-something female audience getting ready to go out was as important as the party itself —informed the move to a truly interactive social media model.
- The result was a significant rise in engagement levels and sales.

Summary

Online fashion retailer ASOS has become the destination for millions of twenty-something shoppers and fashion-lovers around the world, offering not only its own label and well-known fashion brands but also inspiration, advice and content. Its strong sales growth year-on-year underlines the success of its strategy.

For its 2012 UK Christmas campaign the company wanted to deliver on a number of fronts: contribute to overall UK sales, deepen brand engagement with fashion-loving, 20-something women and drive advocacy. It also needed to launch its festive party wear collection and boost promotional sales.

The company decided on a new, totally-integrated social media approach, shifting from one characterised by a broadcast model to one encouraging more social engagement, offering the audience music videos, celebrity interviews, advice, styling tips and offers to help make their '#BestNightEver'.

This gave the company's target 20-something female customers the opportunity to discover, discuss and share content however and wherever they wanted.

The results exceeded expectation, with 5.6 million positive acts of engagement across all social platforms and a social audience increase of 12% in just eight weeks. Sales were substantially higher in this period compared to the eight-week average.

From insight to inspiration

Online fashion retailer ASOS has been one of the big success stories on the modern retailing scene. In the year ended 31 August, 2013 retail sales were up by 40% year-on-year to £754 million. Growth was generated by a strong international performance, up by 44%, with a sales increase of 34% in the UK. ASOS currently has 7.1 million active customers.

With six 'always-on' social platforms stretching across seven key territories, ASOS has from its beginning been a brand that uses social media to drive traffic and sales via deeper brand engagement on a daily basis. Since mid-2012 it has shifted from being a social media broadcaster to offering 'social currency' by delivering content, innovations and conversations that resonate with the lifestyle and shopping habits of its 20-something female audience. The objective has been to create meaningful interactions with the brand to attract them to visit the site and shop while recommending it to their friends as well.

The 2012 peak Christmas trading period was the first opportunity for all of the social channels in the UK to be focused on a single marketing brief over an extended period of time. The overall aim was clear: help deliver a

certain level of UK sales by launching the full-price Christmas party wear collection and promotional sales to clear stock. The social element of the campaign needed to address these commercial objectives in a way that differentiated the retailer from its competitors by being meaningful, exciting and valuable enough so that 20-something girls would consume, discuss, share and love what was produced.

Instrumental to the success of this strategy was the insight that for this UK audience getting ready to party is as important as the party itself, especially over the festive season. With the explosion of media channels, platforms and technology now available, this is no longer a simple process. Instead, she immerses herself in the quest for inspiration, advice, content and clothes whenever and wherever she wants: on a night out, by email, a spare moment on her mobile or while checking into one of her many social networks.

The ASOS Christmas campaign thus needed to be as integrated as she was, meeting her needs by providing inspiration, advice, things to do and share, as well as offering great products and promotions, whenever and wherever she wanted them. So, at any moment, on any platform or device, ASOS was going to be able to help make her #BestNightEver (Figure 1). The campaign wasn't about delivering a discreet social activation on the platform with the biggest audience but about delivering a constant and exciting stream of highly relevant content on all the social platforms, with cross-promotion and the opportunity to pick and mix the content and the platform that most suited their tastes, needs and desires.



Figure 1

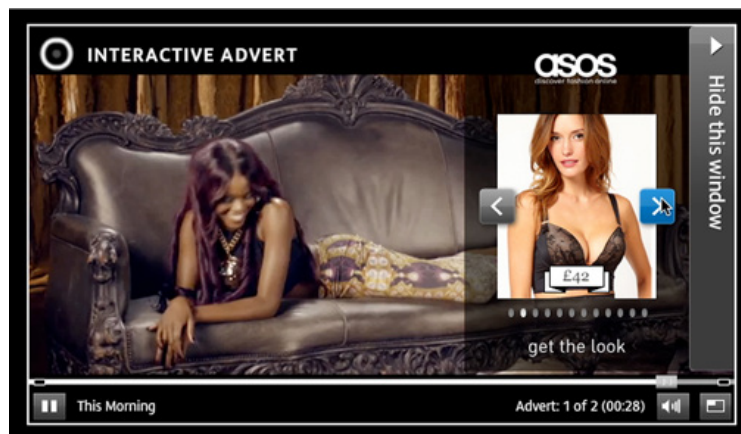


Figure 2

These consumers are addicted to anything new, are technology-savvy and always looking to be the first to uncover new experiences. So it was essential to ensure that this was a successful social campaign rooted in innovation. Creatively, the tone had to be absolutely right, with content that was seen as credible, authentic and desirable in order for them to love it enough to engage with it and share it with their friends.

Getting the party started

As well as centring the 'always-on' activity around the #BestNightEver theme, ASOS also created 15 specific social activations designed around the existing customer behaviour on the most relevant platforms. While these activations each occupied a leading social platform, they were cross-promoted and integrated with each other and with non-social elements of the campaign such as ASOS.com, selected paid-for media and content marketing. Ultimately, each and every activation sought to provide social currency, deepening engagement with the brand and likeliness to come to ASOS.com and shop (Figure 2).

The #BestNightEver social activations and their lead platforms included:

1. Win their #BestNightEver:

- Fashion Bingo (Facebook)
- 'Want it, Pin it' (Pinterest)
- Fantasy #BestNightEver (Twitter)
- 'Like' to win (Instagram)

2. Be inspired for their #BestNightEver:

- Shopalong Google+ Hangouts
- Celebrity interviews and styling tips (YouTube)
- How-to beauty videos (YouTube)
- Celebrity behind-the-scenes party prep (Instagram)
- Blogger exclusives on what makes their #BestNightEver (own blogs and Facebook)
- Now and Then, celebrity party inspiration from the fashion archives (Facebook)

3. Celebrate their #BestNightEver:

- Chris-mix (Facebook) (Figure 3)
- Global Party Feed (Facebook)
- #BestNightEver Facebook hub (Facebook app)
- #BestSongEver (Twitter)
- Cover Photo Generator (Facebook app)

Here is a more detailed look at a few of these activities.

1. Fashion Bingo

Originally conceived as a purely engaging, sticky game to let a lucky winner win £1000 towards their #BestNightEver, this simple Facebook game also delivered substantial revenue. Players matched a digital bingo card to their favourite #BestNightEver celebrity music video for the chance to win a range of discount codes or the grand prize. In only two weeks code redemption alone resulted in significant sales.

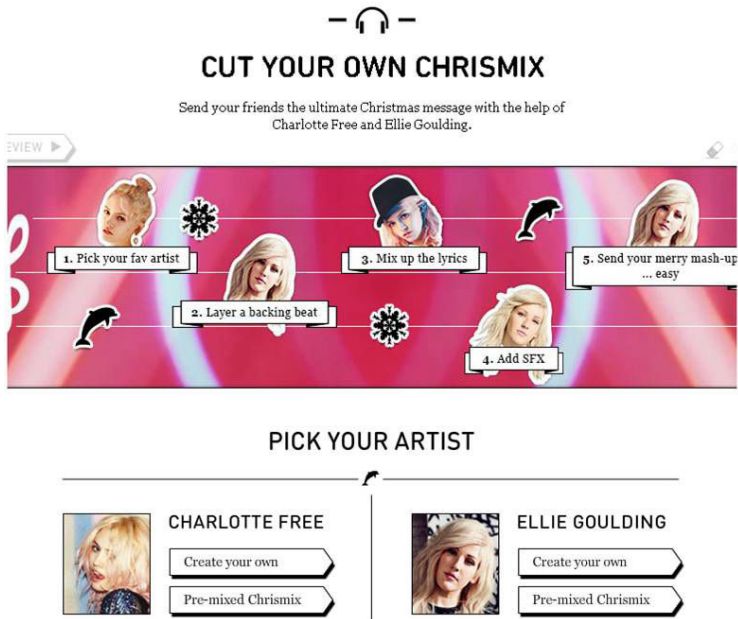


Figure 3

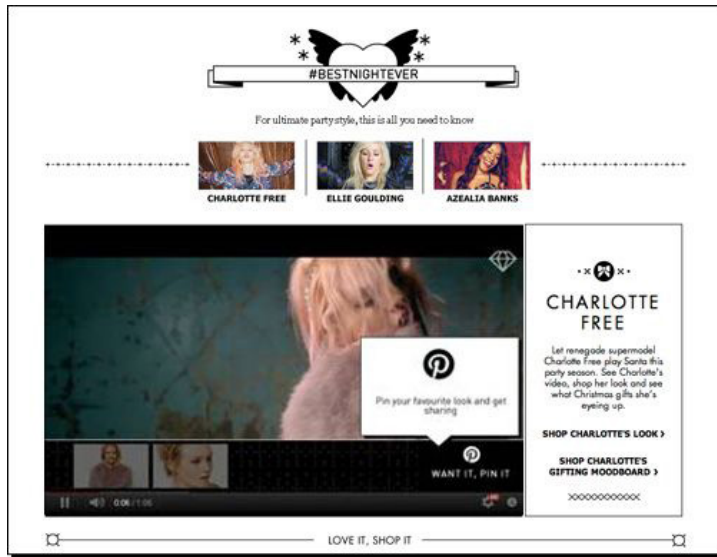


Figure 4

2. Want it, Pin it

A leading-edge 'Want it, Pin it' button was added as an interactive layer inside the #BestNightEver celebrity music videos, allowing viewers to pin their favourite scene straight to their Pinterest board and win the product without stopping the video (Figure 4). This generated over 28,000 re-pins of scenes from the videos, 35 times more than previous re-pinned content. It was also one of the most clicked-on components within the video interactivity and helped produce a 43.7% engagement rate on mobile and owned channels (the previous best-performing benchmark was the 12% achieved by Nike, Adidas, Diesel and LVMH using the same software) as well as two days and 18 hours of additional time spent with the brand over and above video views.

3. Fantasy #BestNightEver

To create a 'real-world' moment for the #BestNightEver campaign, ASOS launched a three-way cover wrap with *Stylist* magazine featuring celebrities Azealia Banks, Ellie Goulding and Charlotte Free, with each leading a different cover. The company knew that this would generate conversation with its audience on Twitter and sought to capitalise on this further by launching a 'Tweet your fantasy #BestNightEver' competition on the same day. The competition was broadcast on the usual channels, the *Stylist* cover wrap and a promoted Twitter trend. The result was over 930 creative and funny tweets, totalling a Twitter reach of 17 million in just 24 hours (Twitter's benchmark is 9.5 million).

4. Shopalong Google+ Hangouts

Another social media breakthrough was using the Shopalong Google+ Hangouts feature to allow Charlotte Free and Azealia Banks to be interviewed remotely from their bedrooms by industry taste-makers, fashion bloggers and social fans. Through a third window an ASOS fashion assistant found relevant products to highlight live on site, enabling viewers to click through and purchase directly. The events were pre-promoted on ASOS channels, including email, as well as via the celebrities' own Twitter handles and Facebook pages. Since the hangouts started, momentum has increased considerably.

5. Party Photobooth

Party Photobooth is a cover photo generator which allows users to customise their Facebook photos and create a special memento of their night out using similar filters and embellishments to those popular on Instagram. Over 1800 people created and published a

cover photo, sending an authentic, value-led, branded wall update to just under 1,000,000 friends (based on existing ASOS fans' average friend numbers).

Exceeding expectations

With over 15 tailored social activations, integrated across a broad array of other platforms, the social element of the campaign gave these 20+ fashion-loving girls an exciting array of social currency which they engaged with and shared (Figure 5).

Highlights from this fully-integrated approach to social media include:

- Shoppable celebrity music videos received over one million views in the first two weeks.
- There were over 78,000 creative competition entries across Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter.
- Radian 6 Social Buzz monitoring shows ASOS
- #BestNightEver as the most used hashtag across the campaign period vs competitor brand names and marketing tags (beating Topshop #Whosthatgirl featuring Kate Bosworth).
- The #BestNightEver Facebook app had over 55,000 unique users, a return rate of 58% and an average dwell time of three minutes per session.
- Behind the scenes model shots from the Savvy Sunday sale received over 39,000 likes on Instagram in just two days, demonstrating the power of a 'social currency' over a 'broadcast-led' approach to social media, even with promotions.

Over eight weeks, social activity delivered 5.6 million positive, measurable acts of engagement with campaign content, successfully delivering on the objective to deepen brand engagement with the target audience. This represented a tripling of engagement compared to an average eight-week period in 2012 and

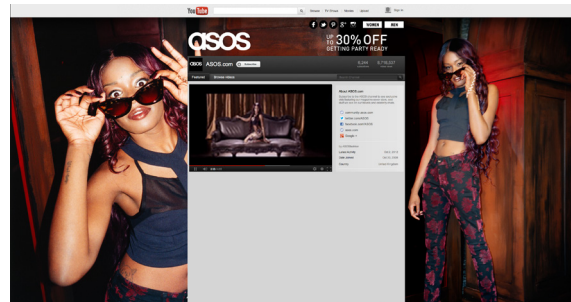


Figure 5

also saw an increase in more meaningful actions as a proportion of the whole. A good example of this is within Facebook, where a general increase in activity was clearly matched with an increase in the proportion of comments and shares, not just likes.

Through advocacy alone (e.g. without any 'like' driving activity or gated content) combined social audiences grew by +12%. Again, Facebook demonstrated this most clearly with page 'likes' growing 2.94 times faster than the yearly average over the campaign period, generating 281,059 new fans.

Creating social currency, as opposed to broadcasting on social media, also helped deliver substantial sales directly attributable to activity on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and Google+ over the eight-week campaign period. This helped the Christmas campaign meet its broader objectives of increasing UK traffic during November and December and beating targets set for UK peak trading sales. This enabled the company to report +34% year-on-year UK growth to the City, despite the fact that there had been relatively static growth during 2011 and the first half of the year.

About The Marketing Society



Inspiring bolder marketing leaders

The Marketing Society is an exclusive network of senior marketers. Over the past 54 years we have emerged as one of the most influential drivers of marketing in the business community. The Society challenges its members to think differently and be bolder marketing leaders by supporting the development of leading-edge thinking and promoting the evidence of effective marketing. We do this through The Marketing Society Awards for Excellence, our publication Market Leader and in the online Clubhouse. Our well-respected calendar of world class events provides extensive networking opportunities and inspiration with speakers including Lord Sebastian Coe, Sir Terry Leahy and Paul Polman.

We are the place for discerning marketers to learn, develop and share best practice.

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MARKETING EXCELLENCE

"A treasure trove of case study examples covering the whole waterfront, from launching new brands to revitalising, sustaining and extending established ones, and from insights to advertising and sustainability. Whatever your business, they should make you proud to be a marketer, shake up your thinking and inspire you to go the extra mile."

Professor Patrick Barwise, London Business School, Chairman of Which?

"These cases are a great source to stimulate your thinking. Some will stimulate new thoughts; some will unlock ideas from the back of your memory. All of them however are great fuel for growth."

Keith Weed, Chief Marketing and Communication Officer, Unilever

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