

MARKETING SOCIETY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

COMMUNICATING BRILLIANTLY: BRANDED CONTENT

BRAND: Tu, by Sainsbury's

CAMPAIGN: *The Christmas Jumpers*

"Our clothing and general merchandise businesses traded strongly over the quarter, in particular our clothing business was up nearly ten per cent year-on-year. We sold more than twice the number of Christmas jumpers compared to last."

Mike Coupe, CEO, Sainsbury's. Third Quarter Trading Statement, 8th January 2015

"We don't normally comment on specific campaigns, but this really is exceptional."

Steve Hatch, Managing Director, Facebook UK&Ire.

Christmas 2014. The most brutal grocery retail battle for over a decade. For Sainsbury's, delivering incremental revenue growth from new areas beyond grocery would be vital. And with an unlikely - yet spectacular - performance in novelty knitwear, we did just that.

But how did we turn a quiet side bet into a roaring mainstream success? A success that became Sainsbury's lead story in its post-Christmas trading statement to the city?

How did we embark on a social content strategy to engineer a genuine pop-culture moment with a bunch of Dancing Dads in a video viewed 28 million times and shared over ½million? A pop-culture moment that drove sale units of Christmas Jumpers up 116% YOY, resulting in cash sales up by 120% to £4.2m?

This certainly isn't a normal way to sell knitwear. But there aren't normally the same constraints to deal with – like being a potential distraction in the midst of a bigger marketing battle; little budget; no search presence and no ecommerce solution.

And all this with a total marketing spend (inc. media) of under £100k?

Yes we got lucky. But as you'll see, we make our own luck.

View the entire campaign here <http://bit.ly/1DWKc34>

1. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT – “BLUE CHRISTMAS”

As the Big Four’s¹ core grocery business gets squeezed, **incremental non-food growth areas are of vital importance. Merchandising around seasonal events is a particularly fast moving, high growth, high margin target.**

Competition is growing significantly across retailers to **be the destination for these non-food retail moments - they can have significant incremental returns for very low investment.**

King of these is Christmas.

Which posed a problem.

Christmas is already a grocery battleground, so as the Big Four (plus some noisy new entrants) squared up for a brutal festive season, the **danger of diverting too much marketing firepower to developing share in incremental areas** caused concern.

That said, securing a stronger share in these extended retail fields is of crucial strategic importance. So away from the main Christmas campaign, integrated client/agency teams were briefed to see how Sainsbury’s might behave in a way that could **grow a foothold with minimal investment** and maybe – if we knocked it out of the park - **generate some incremental short-term wins to augment a tough Christmas trading season.....**

2. STRATEGIC APPROACH – NAILING NOVELTY KNITWEAR

Bridget Jones is to blame for many things including the **novelty Christmas Jumper**: Colin Firth in a Rudolph sweater introduced a new ironic trend that gradually took hold of the British Christmas. Add in the now annual “Christmas Jumper” Day in aid of Save the Children and **suddenly you have a new Christmas tradition.**

This maturing cultural trend had been identified by the team as a key merchandising moment for 2014 and buyers at Tu were busy securing all kinds of playful patterns; how big could the marketing opportunity be?

Search term analysis showed that volumes for “Christmas Jumper” were growing massively YoY. Modelling predicted over 9million searches for Christmas jumpers in the last Qtr. of 2014. And so **a late call was made by the business to take as big a piece of this as possible.**

¹ Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury’s, Morrisons

The search traffic trend was promising. Well it was, if we'd ranked....

Unfortunately on 763 identified search terms, **Sainsbury's do not rank in the top 20 on any** – clothing retailers dominate.

Also, Tu being in the midst of building its e-commerce platform compounded our marketing challenge: **there was no way to capitalize on this retail interest end-to-end. ALL RETAIL HAD TO TAKE PLACE IN STORE.**

We'd need to behave differently. We would **focus on awareness & engagement as our key drivers**: give Sainsbury's some cultural currency to make it a destination for jumpers, or more precisely, **make Christmas Jumpers a top of mind consideration instore during the weekly shop**. Not least because Sainsbury's already has huge footfall. What's more, we'd identified novelty jumpers as an anomalous fashion retail purchase, eliciting a "planned-impulse" Christmas purchase behaviour, much like Bailey's or Quality Street: **communications is just about highlighting the latent emotional triggers.**

To deliver this at scale our gut feel was we needed telly, but we didn't have a telly budget. Could we find telly-like behaviour elsewhere?

It was not just search that was growing: **conversation and buzz around "Christmas jumpers" was growing** substantially too. Continuing the theme of triggers, our insight was that novelty jumpers have themselves become **an important "trigger point" for social interaction in the festive run-up²** - a framework for playful participation in a connected, social Christmas culture, whether it is at the office party or in the home.

And where we lost in search, we had an advantage in social. **Sainsbury's is the most socially influential retail brand in the UK³**. In particular the Facebook community of 1.2m fans is very active.

Could we utilize social as our primary platform for driving retail in-store?

The direct value of social to sales is contentious. Research around Black Friday suggested social accounted for less than 1% of all ecommerce⁴. **What's more interesting is growing evidence to suggest that social's true retail value is the influence instore.** The planning team harnessed recent research by Ikea who "split test" by location to

² What Hugh MacLeod has termed a "social object": "human beings are social animals. We like to socialize. But if you think about it, there needs to be a reason for it to happen in the first place. That reason, that "node" in the social network, is what we call the Social Object."

<http://gapingvoid.com/so/>

³ <http://www.thedrum.com/news/2014/11/25/sainsbury-s-most-socially-influential-retail-brand-finds-klout-research>

⁴ Research around Black Friday suggested social accounted for less than 1% of all ecommerce <http://digitalintelligencetoday.com/ibm-reports-social-commerce-in-the-red-on-black-friday/>

ascertain whether Facebook spend was actually driving footfall & purchase. Their results showed an ROI of 6:1⁵.

Given we were **not seeking to drive footfall, merely influence existing traffic**, we felt that **whilst brave, using social as the only channel to drive fame for Sainsbury's Christmas Jumpers was a valid route**: the interruptive behaviour of advertising rethought for a community of fans who'd be a springboard across a social graph which would - by definition of social graph dynamics - reach a disproportionate share of other Sainsbury's shoppers too.

Sounded good. If we could nail the idea and create the right inspiring content.....

3. CAMPAIGN IDEA & EXECUTION: *CREATING LUCK*

If Christmas jumpers are a "new tradition", **what's a universal tradition of the family Christmas that we could play with and subvert?**

Dad Dancing.

Everybody has (had) one. Many people are one. Many people are married to one. **A universal with lots of triggerpoints.** And the magic of Christmas – and the magical powers of a novelty jumper – would **transform this comedy trope into something surprising and wonderful.**

We had a trope, now we needed a (dance) troop. Of real Dads - they had to be real for authenticity. **We hunted across the country for middle-aged Dads who could bust a move.** Sounds easier than it was. We put them together, called them The Christmas Jumpers, and choreographed a street dance routine to a brilliant dubstep dance remix of Tchaikovsky's *Dance of The Sugar Plum Fairies*.

We dressed a community hall for a Christmas show **and invited an audience of families to come and watch it to guarantee a genuinely startled reaction.** The Gonzo shooting style was produced to look as amateur as possible – **huge efforts went into making this video content look like a captured moment from any given church hall Christmas concert.**

CHRISTMAS JUMPERS ARE HERE, declared Tu by Sainsbury's

LAUNCH & RECEPTION – *HERE'S WHERE IT GETS SILLY*

⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2014/may/14/ikea-facebook-mobile-campaign>

As our content distribution would be heavily reliant on organic shares, we took the psychology of sharing very seriously (it is both a science and an art!). For a new wave of digital publishers, the distribution of content is undertaken with a precise sensibility. For them the viral effect is not a magical moment, but the result of a certain scenario – many of the conditions of which can be created. We co-opted these behaviours and thinking to provide our rules, **always asking ourselves, *what would BuzzFeed or Upworthy do?*** **In every executional aspect we tested everything, right down to the minutiae of the video's title and thumbnail image.**

We concentrated our efforts on Facebook with our limited spend promoting the video⁶. **Since Facebook changed its algorithm early in 2014 to prioritize video natively, we'd monitored performance closely, and saw it becoming a real challenger to YouTube⁷.** What's more, as the *Ice Bucket Challenge* had illustrated, the psychology of Facebook video is different; **the triggers subtly favouring video that is more community focused, more inspirational, more positive: all things perfect for Christmas.**

An extensive PR programme hit mainstream press, just as journos were turning to playful Christmas topics.

WE HAD 2 MILLION VIEWS IN JUST TWO DAYS.

28 MILLION VIEWS BY THREE WEEKS - the film extensively ripped & re-posted across YouTube & Facebook by fans.

But forget views. **This film was securing MORE SHARES THAN LIKES on Facebook.** It's hard to overstate the significance of this. People were leaping to share the film with others before they even liked it. **WITHIN TWO WEEKS THE FILM HAD BEEN SHARED OVER ½ MILLION TIMES.** Facebook had never seen this in the UK before and they went public with a press statement - a validation of our approach⁸.

Forget the big spending Christmas ads: we were **THE MOST SHARED AD IN THE UK FOR A WHOLE WEEK IN DECEMBER⁹,** and all of this driven organically. Social sentiment was tracked at a staggeringly 99.8% positive.

The Telegraph declared, "Is this the best festive advert?"¹⁰ and a barrage of global coverage ensued, generating over £3.5m of PR and media value.

The "Christmas Jumpers" **performed live on ITV's *Good Morning Britain* on**

⁶ Planned with a strong focus on mobile (Facebook's increasingly natural delivery anyway) because of proximity to retail moment.

⁷ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffbercovici/2014/10/16/facebook-is-challenging-youtube-for-video-supremacy-on-facebook/>

⁸ <http://www.thedrum.com/news/2014/12/05/sainsbury-s-dubstep-dancing-dads-film-unexpected-hit-facebook>

⁹ Source: Unruly Viral Video Chart

¹⁰ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/virals/11288182/Christmas-Jumper-Day-is-this-the-best-festive-advert.html>

Christmas Eve following an invitation from producers, and even had interest from the *Ellen* show in the U.S.

We'd certainly captured a moment.

4. THE RESULTS - HERE'S WHERE IT GETS SERIOUS.

It was a tough Christmas for everybody: the City was circling.

Sainsbury's, whilst slightly down, delivered a robust performance - especially around non-food – and **fronted its entire Q3 City trading statement with the surprise success of Christmas Jumpers**. This led the reporting and commentary across BBC1 News, CNBC, the FT and other city pages. **Shares jumped 4%**.

Sales units of Christmas Jumpers were up 116% YOY, resulting in cash sales up 120% YOY to £4.2m.

Sainsbury's grew to 7th largest retailer of Christmas jumpers in 2014, and grew a 5% Value Share (£) of a growing market.

Investment in the whole campaign was only £84k, including all production & media.

There was no other paid marketing communications around Christmas Jumpers so this is a rare occasion where the impact of communications directly on the business can be isolated and defined. **The ROI of this activity is calculated at 9.3:1¹¹**

This astounding result is aside from the significant increases in overall brand awareness and empathy for Sainsbury's Tu. Alongside this a 6% increase in subscribers/fans across social platforms was noted – a big increase on a mature base.

Our little side bet had become the main event.

5. CLIENT TESTIMONIAL:

"The radical approach of this strategy delivered beyond all expectations and defined a new behavior in content across our social platforms. The scale of its contribution to our business was evidenced by the lead billing it received in our Christmas trading report to the city. Not bad for a side bet!"

Mark Given, Brand Communications Director.

¹¹ To ensure a true indication on ROI, this calculation factors out estimated incremental YOY sales that would have occurred naturally from the growing market.

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