

A young boy with curly hair is looking at a penguin in a dark setting. The boy is on the left, looking towards the right. The penguin is on the right, looking towards the left. The background is dark and blurry.

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Marketing Society Awards 2015
Brand Activation

Monty's Christmas

John Lewis

Executive Summary

Objective

To deliver a market-leading Christmas campaign for John Lewis. Put another way, this paper unwraps a whole new level of campaign integration and activation, never seen before by any retailer in the UK. As a result it sets the benchmark for all brands whose marketing programmes aim for emotional engagement, multi-touchpoint activation, social sharing, PR generation, and above all commercial success.

Scale of the task

This is Christmas. And this is the John Lewis Christmas campaign. This is arguably the most high profile marketing campaign in the UK, and the most significant commercial period for all retailers. Each new John Lewis Christmas campaign is hotly anticipated, analysed, debated, critiqued, rated and pretty much talked about by everyone. Failing to engage the nation will therefore have a significant commercial, social and cultural impact on the John Lewis brand.

Key Results

The Monty the Penguin campaign was the most viewed 29 million times.

It was shared 288,000 times.

Soft toys of Monty & Mabel sold out in a day.

Monty ran in windows, in-store and even on the roof of the Oxford Street shop. He featured in books, apps, and on a huge range of merchandise.

Overall merchandise sales from the campaign paid for the ad.

John Lewis Christmas sales were 5.8% up on 2013 – itself a record year.

John Lewis experienced a record sales week, taking £175m for the first time, and overall outperformed the BRC by 4%.

Econometrics has proved a profit ROI of £7.44 on every pound spent on marketing. The highest return of any John Lewis Christmas campaign.



Introduction

We all know the story of Christmas. Well, that one yes, and now the other one. The one where the retailers unleash their big adverts. Some have celebs, some have Magic and Sparkle and some make you cry.

Well, this is a paper about exactly that. A big Christmas ad from the people who make you cry. Except it isn't really, this is a paper that shows just how much successful Christmas marketing is no longer just about the big TV advert.

This paper unwraps a whole new level of campaign integration and activation, never seen before by any retailer in the UK. As a result it sets the benchmark for all brands whose marketing programmes aim for emotional engagement, multi-touchpoint activation, social sharing, PR generation, and above all commercial success.

This is the marketing case study every marketing director should be dreaming of.



The importance of Christmas

It's been well documented how significant Christmas is for retailers. Beyond the huge sales potential, success in the festive season demonstrates to customers, staff, stakeholders and suppliers the general health of the business and the confidence they should put in the brand.

It's no different for John Lewis. Christmas represents around 40% of the business' annual revenues and success at this time sets the brand up as it enters the January sales and the whole new year of trading.

In the past John Lewis has used marketing to good effect at Christmas. However, the 2014 campaign represents a significant step forwards in the breadth, depth and innovation of the retailer's marketing approach.

But it's not just marketing ambition that's driving this, it's commercial reality. John Lewis is a leading omni-channel retailer, trading across physical shops, online and mobile sites, and the mix of the two that is 'Click and Collect'.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH | WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2014

Features

Dry your eyes. Open your wallet. Christmas starts here

John Lewis launches its seasonal advert today. Harry Wallop was given a preview

From the start of winter when snow falls and the sun is still shining, Christmas is in the air. It's the time when the nation's shops and stores are at their busiest. It's the time when the nation's shops and stores are at their busiest. It's the time when the nation's shops and stores are at their busiest.

It's not just marketing ambition that's driving this, it's commercial reality. John Lewis is a leading omni-channel retailer, trading across physical shops, online and mobile sites, and the mix of the two that is 'Click and Collect'.

Twitter is already abuzz, and YouTube is bracing itself for millions of hits

John Lewis's 150th anniversary is being celebrated in a big way. The retailer is launching a series of events and offers to mark the occasion. It's a time when the nation's shops and stores are at their busiest.

Commercial Success

Normally papers like this lead up to the sales results. This time we'd like to set them out upfront. John Lewis undoubtedly 'won Christmas'.

Across the 5 weeks to 27th December, John Lewis sales were up 5.5% year-on-year vs a market increase in December of only 1.5%. (As measured by the BRC)

With a record sales week, taking £175m for the first time, John Lewis ultimately outperformed Next and Debenhams by 6% and M&S by 10%.

And what about the other retailers who ran big Christmas campaigns?

Well, Sainsbury's saw sales fall by 1.7% in the quarter including December and saw its worst Christmas sales for a decade. Tesco fell 2.9% that quarter, while Morrisons led the fallers with a 3.1% drop in the 6 weeks to 4th January.



The marketing campaign behind the sales

2014 was the Christmas of Monty and Mabel. Monty is a penguin. The best friend of a little boy. But he's still a bit lonely. He needs another Penguin to love. And that's what the little boy gives him for Christmas. Her name is Mabel. And like Monty she's really a soft toy...that you can actually buy, in John Lewis.

The campaign followed the long-standing theme for John Lewis at Christmas, celebrating those who put more thought into the gifts they give. The creative idea around Monty was built from the universal insight that young children often see their favourite toys as almost real and as true friends.

While other retailers readied their big TV advertising efforts, at John Lewis Money and Mabel were being turned into the most integrated campaign run by John Lewis, and possibly the most integrated of any retailer, ever.



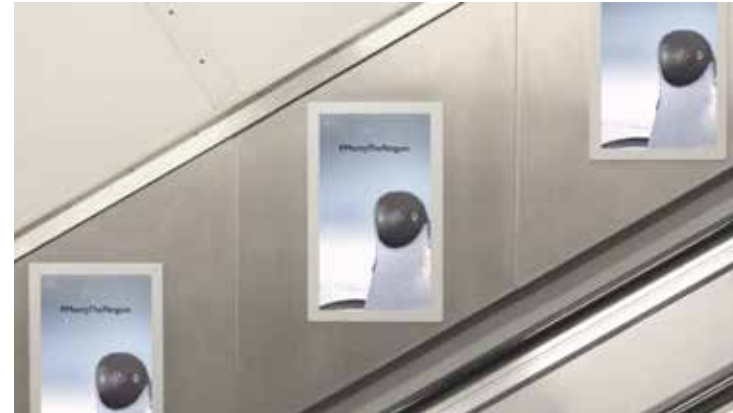
How the campaign teased everyone

A John Lewis Christmas campaign is increasingly a media event, and in 2014 the campaign was 'teased' like never before. From Sunday 2nd November to the 7th (when the campaign broke on TV) Monty featured unbranded on mini-trailers in C4 'idents', promoting the first airing of the full ad in Gogglebox. At the same time he started appearing unbranded on digital outdoor sites across key cities.

The intrigue grew significantly as interest in who exactly Monty was started to spread on social media. All unbranded activity featured #monthypenguin which fuelled further anticipation and triggered hundreds of conversations on Twitter with over 1.5m people overhearing them.

Monty also arrived unannounced in the post for key online bloggers, further fueling the questions as to who the little penguin was...

And for more still, Monty introduced himself via an online media first – scratch off digital advertising. There were over 5 million impressions of these new interaction ads, leading 230,000 people to scratch off and meet Monty for the first time. That's over 4 times the industry average interaction rate, validating a completely new digital advertising format.



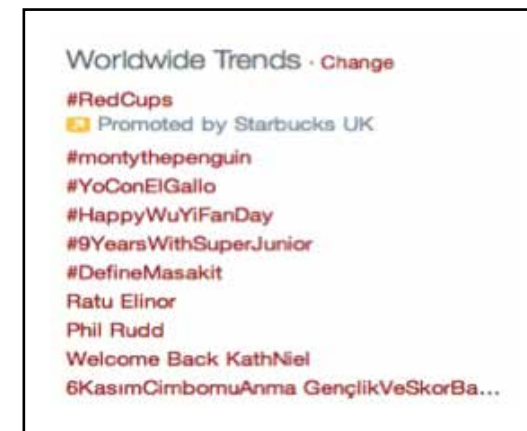
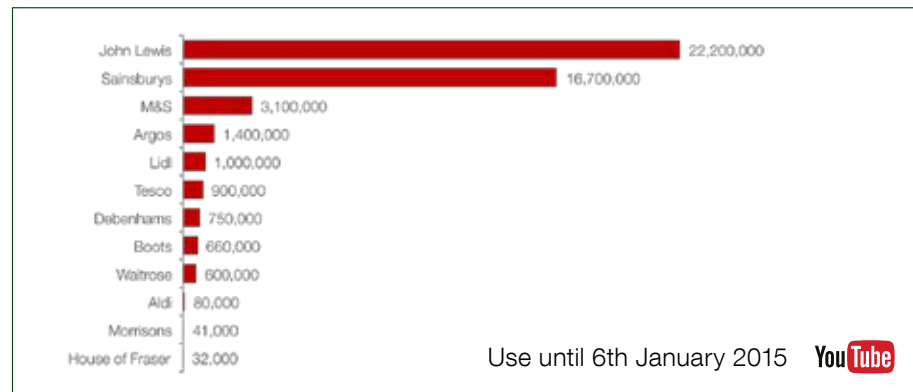
How the campaign lit up the internet

The campaign was launched on John Lewis's social media pages a day before it aired on TV, to ensure key fans, followers and advocates got a 24 hour sneak preview.

It's fair to say they didn't keep it entirely to themselves and word of Monty spread. In fact just one hour after premiering online Monty the Penguin was trending #1 globally on Twitter.

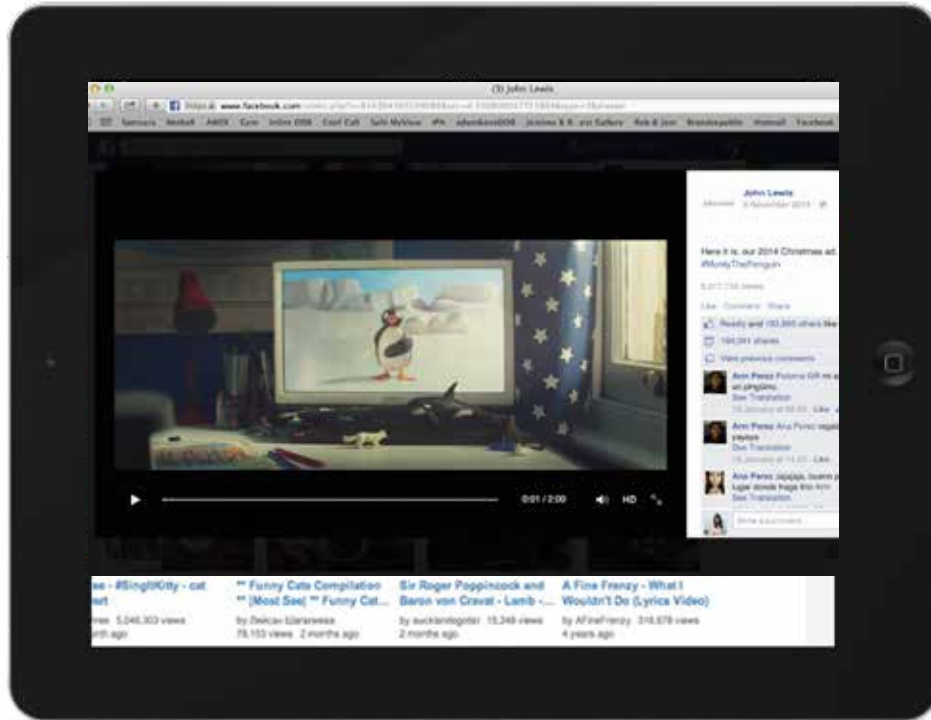
By the end of the launch weekend the advert had been viewed 16.3 million times across Facebook and then YouTube.

The final online viewing figures have topped 29 million. That's more than double the 2013 campaign featuring the animated 'Bear and Hare' (which itself saw over 2 million new views in 2014 stimulated by Monty's popularity), and far more than John Lewis' benchmark competitors' advertising achieved. Debenhams achieved 750k views, House of Fraser 32k and M&S 3.1m - the combined total of all three key competitors was less than 15% of the John Lewis total. No other UK retailer has created a campaign that has generated online engagement to this level.



How the campaign proved that Christmas is indeed for sharing

The Monty advert was shared 288,000 times across Facebook and Twitter. By comparison our key competitors advertising was shared 141,000 times COMBINED.



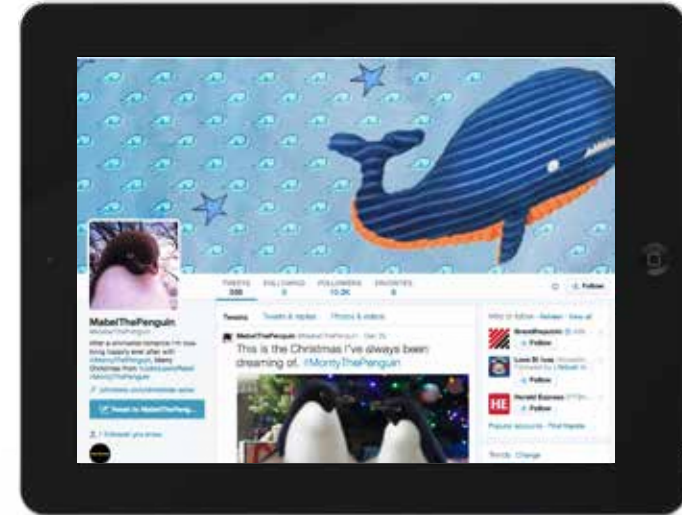
Brand	Number of FB shares	Number of mentions	Total shares
John Lewis:	164,000	124,300	288,300
Sainsbury's:	68,000	23,700	91,700
M&S:	27,000	12,700	39,700
Debenham's:	1,325	4,000	5,300
Argos:	88	549	637
Boots:	1,293	359	1,700
Waitrose:	2,000	100*	2,100

How the campaign led the way in social selling

Having so many online views is great, but this year watching wasn't the only thing YouTube users did. Over 260,000 of them clicked on the film, straight through to the John Lewis website to start their gift buying.

And on social media Monty and Mabel built up quite a following, attracting 44,000 followers, bringing new visitors to the John Lewis world. Across the campaign period Facebook fans grew by 55%, YouTube views grew by 86% and Twitter followers increased by 24%.

Crucially the social media activity contributed to a 5.8% increase in sales vs 2013.



How the campaign stormed the charts

The soundtrack to Monty's story was the John Lennon track 'Real Love', sung by Tom Odell. It proved immediately popular rising to #3 on the iTunes charts in the face of stiff competition from Band Aid, and the X Factor winner.



How the campaign rewarded special customers

myJohnLewis is John Lewis's recently launched CRM programme, rewarding best customers with a more active and unique relationship with the brand.

The promise to bring these customers inside the business they love, included a set of special experiences around the campaign, just for them.

First up they are received an 'insiders' email giving them a behind the scenes peak at the making of the upcoming Christmas advert and campaign.

Additionally every shop hosted a myJohnLewis Christmas shopping evening, where Monty featured prominently, to such as extent that visitors were given a Monty & Mabel Tote bag gift that evening.

Then across November John Lewis ran a Monty themed series of 'Countdown to Christmas' events, including the chance to win holidays to see the Northern Lights.

Alignment with the campaign made the interaction with special customers far more compelling, helping Partnership Card sales over Christmas grow 66% in value versus 2013.



How the campaign lived in-store...and on-store

The in-store activation took Monty's Christmas to a whole new level. In fact, all the way to the roof of the Oxford Street store!

All 41 John Lewis shops had a Monty's Den, where children and their parents could experience his penguin world and the story of giving at Christmas. In the Den were Monty's Goggles, a highly innovative use of Google Cardboard technology delivering the story of the campaign in an immersive 3D digital experience. John Lewis was the first UK retailer to use this technology in store and others are now quickly following suit.

In the Oxford Street store the digital technology was taken a step further with 'Monty's Magical Toy Machine'. In partnership with Microsoft this was a true technological first – children's soft toys were digitally scanned and then brought to life before their eyes, so they could dance and sing together with their favourite cuddly friend on the latest 4k screens.



John Lewis Bringing Skills to Life

Hello I'm Mabel, I'd love to tell you a little bit more about myself...

What you need:
 - Paper
 - Scissors
 - Glue
 - A rubber roll tube
 - Black and white paint

How to make it:
 1. Use an A4 sheet of paper which is plain about halfway to the bottom edge.
 2. Fold the paper in half lengthways.
 3. Fold the paper in half widthways.
 4. Fold the paper into a triangle.
 5. Fold the top corners to the center line.
 6. Fold the top corners to the center line.
 7. Fold the top corners to the center line.
 8. Fold the top corners to the center line.
 9. Fold the top corners to the center line.
 10. Fold the top corners to the center line.

John Lewis Bringing Skills to Life

Antarctic origami
 Use hand-eye coordination to carefully fold a piece of paper using the ancient art of origami and transform it into a cute penguin.

What you need:
 - Sheet of paper
 - Scissors
 - Black pen

How to make it:
 1. Fold the paper in half lengthways.
 2. Fold the paper in half widthways.
 3. Fold the paper into a triangle.
 4. Fold the top corners to the center line.
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John Lewis Bringing Skills to Life

Make your own Monty
 Whilst you'll only usually find Adlibbe penguins in the Antarctic, follow the steps below to make your very own Monty.

What you need:
 - Scissors
 - Glue
 - A rubber roll tube
 - Black and white paint

How to make it:
 1. Cut out a rectangle of paper.
 2. Fold the paper in half lengthways.
 3. Fold the paper in half widthways.
 4. Fold the paper into a triangle.
 5. Fold the top corners to the center line.
 6. Fold the top corners to the center line.
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How the campaign lived in-store...and on-store

The windows too were transformed with families of Penguins, showcasing a wide range of gifts, and attracting much positive attention.

And then above all this was Monty's Winter Garden, built especially on the roof of the flagship store in Oxford St. Over 50,000 visitors made their way up to experience Monty's House, where you could bake cookies and enjoy all manner of festive fun.



How the ad paid for itself

One of the biggest activation programmes within the campaign involved a wide range of Monty and Mabel themed products.

There were bags, onesies, mugs, bedding, towels, flannels, cushions, T-shirts, pyjamas, umbrellas, baby-grows, slippers, ties, lamps, chocolates, scarfs, socks, story books...and above all soft toys.

Now much has been written about how quickly the soft toys sold out...on the very first day the ad launched online in fact. And this was despite John Lewis ordering six times as many Penguins as Bears and Hares from 2013. The volume of toys that could have been sold was huge, but the stock was limited, making them rather cult items.

All this merchandise generated significant sales, and delivered more profit than it cost to actually make the campaign.

Overall econometric modelling by MarketShare demonstrates that the campaign drove £140.8 million in incremental revenue.

This represents a profit ROI of 7.44 for every pound spent, a 3% increase on last years profit ROI of £7.21.



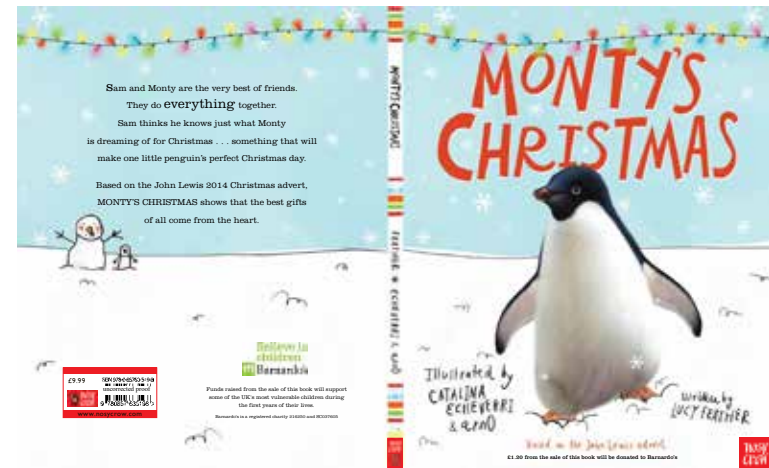
How the campaign contributed to the greater good

But Monty and Mabel didn't just help boost Christmas sales, they helped support important charity partners too.

John Lewis did extensive fundraising for the Barnardo's charity during their shared 150th year, and the strong commercial performance at Christmas contributed significantly to the annual total of £870,000 raised.

However, sales of Monty and Mabel merchandise directly contributed to a specific new charity partner - the WWF. Sales of jumpers etc, were added to all the profits from copies of the Tom Odell single sold in-store, and all the profits from the 25,000 Monty Christmas books sold to help support the Adelle Penguins in Antarctica.

A further indirect benefit also emerged for the world's real life Penguins. As a result of the campaign the WWF's 'Adopt a Penguin' programme saw a huge spike in interest. In fact there were more than 7,000 Penguin adoptions across the Christmas period, 300% up on the 2013 figure.



Conclusion

Objective

Monty the Penguin represents a new era of modern retail marketing, an era where integration and activation extend beyond a joined up TV, print and online campaign, and into new realms of in-store theatre, merchandising, CSR activations, global technological firsts, and social media marketing where even the characters in the campaign has their own voices and profiles.

This is Immersive Marketing, where customers become wrapped up in a story, immersed in a world of activation, and engaged with the characters and the message with new depth and feeling.

And it works, far more successfully than any campaign that preceded it, generating record sales, record views, record shares and record returns...all about a little boy, his Penguin and true love.

