

Hammerson Gift Cards: How the Gift Card went from last resort to a thoughtful choice

The gift that keeps on giving (to Hammerson)

Nine of Hammerson's ten UK shopping centres are united under one Gift Card scheme, which has been running since 2008.

The Gift Card is viewed as a valuable service to customers, particularly at Christmas time when people are faced with multiple gift-buying decisions.

But the Gift Card also has a strong commercial imperative as it keeps the gifted cash within Hammerson.

Furthermore, the final spend with a Gift Card is usually +40% of its original valueⁱ, and most cards are cashed-in during the first three months of ownership, helping sales during the lean retail months of January to March.ⁱⁱ

Sales of Hammerson Gift Cards had been steady for years, without much improvement, aside from some growth in 2014 following a small investment.

Given the commercial benefits, Hammerson was determined to boost Gift Card sales over the key Christmas period of November and December 2015, raising the marketing budget slightly in 2015.

A Christmas cop-out

So why weren't more people buying gift cards?

Sadly gift cards carry a lot of stigma, and are often purchased as a last resort option.

As one blogger put it:

"A gift card is an admission of failure, an acknowledgment that I could not find anything suitable in the amount of time I gave myself to look for that special token".ⁱⁱⁱ

Worst still, gift cards can be viewed as an actively lazy, thoughtless option, the equivalent of saying "I don't know you that well" or "I don't care about you that much".

As one commentator eloquently put it:

"If you give gift vouchers, you're an unimaginative, lazy fool".^{iv}

Traditional Gift Card marketing refers to them as being 'for the hard to buy for', reinforcing purchaser concerns that buying a Gift Card is basically a cop-out.

Our challenge

Our key challenge was how to move Gift Cards from being a lazy, thoughtless option to a great choice for customers. We wanted to move away from traditional, dry Gift Card marketing to engage people emotionally.

With a limited budget and a marketing team of just one, we needed to ensure efficiencies in production and management by creating one campaign that could be used across all shopping centres.

We also needed a campaign that could be repurposed during 2016 for other tactical events such as a Gift Card for Mother's Day or Father's Day.

And given the marketing budget had been increased slightly from 2014, we had strong targets to reach:

1. Drive sales volume and total value of the Gift Card by more than the growth achieved year-on-year in 2014, for the key Christmas period of November and December 2015:
 - Target Volume growth to beat +9.0%
 - Target Value growth to beat +10.6%
2. Generate consumer engagement with the Gift Card, with a target of at least 20,000 views

Increasing the value of the Gift Card

Most of us have been stopped short by a relative, partner or friend suddenly asking 'What do you want for Christmas?'

Unless you are one of a small percentage of people who have everything listed months in advance, you have probably been left floundering.

In fact, even if you do have some ideas, it's the British way not to appear too keen and instead um and ah your way to saying, 'Oh I don't know really...I don't really need anything...I haven't given it any thought...'

If you were a relative looking for guidance on what to get, you would be left stranded by this answer! How are we meant to know what to buy people when they can't even tell us themselves?

By playing off this well-known, but often overlooked truism, we could bring to life the true value of a Hammerson Gift Card.

No longer were Gift Cards the lazy option, but rather a sensible, desirable choice for people who don't even know what they want themselves.

Bringing the insight to life

We created an emotive, short piece of film to demonstrate this simple human insight, asking a number of people into a studio and without warning firing this question at them:

'So, what would you like for Christmas?'

We shot the film near enough to Christmas for this to be a relevant question.

We edited together the highlights, Gogglebox-style, to show people reacting, as normal, with hesitation and confusion.

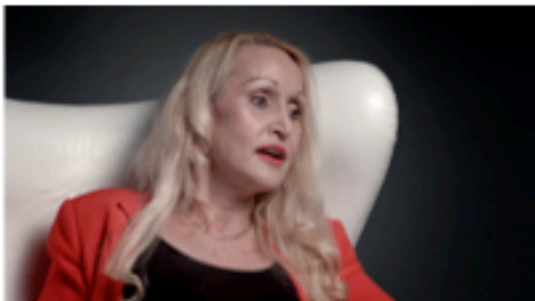
The film ended with an image of a Gift Card from one of the nine shopping centres, and the call-to-action "Available online or in centre". Viewers could click through to a webpage to purchase Gift Cards.



...What do I really want for Christmas?...



...Oo I don't know!"



...A very wealthy boyfriend, with, you know, a decent body. Maybe?...



...I don't know! I wish I'd thought about it before now...



...Raquel Welch!...



...I have no idea...



...I'm just trying to think...



...I've only got a 42-inch TV and I feel pathetic quite frankly. What do you think?...



...Um...a dress maybe? Or maybe paintballing...



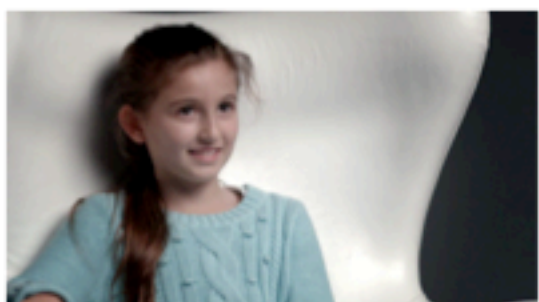
...I'm very bad at choosing what I want for Christmas. I think a hamster that would last for more than a year. Or socks...



...Classy, erm, things...



...So you know, those big scarves that go on and you sort of become a scarf. Maybe something like that. If not...or a dog!...



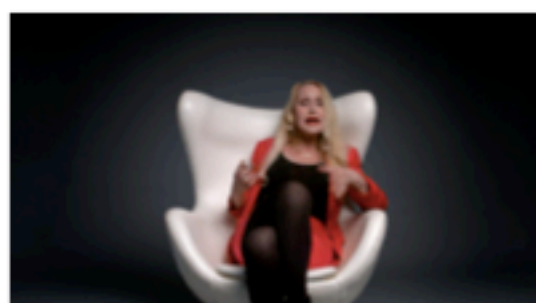
...I don't really know. Maybe a swimming costume...



...Maybe a nurse's uniform. A tickler.. No. Just get me the catsuit!...



...Gosh...



...Maybe even a Ken doll!...



...Anything pink...actually, er...



...I don't know, I'm not a sort of "thingy" person...



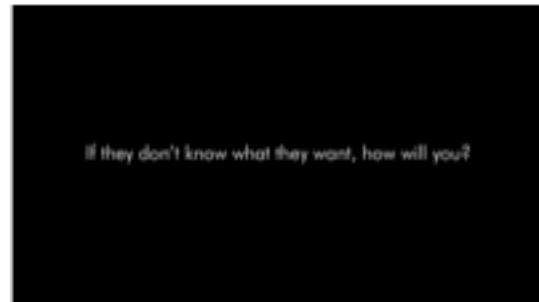
...The power so I could see through walls...



...I want everything!...



...I don't know! I'm really struggling to answer that! Erm, I'd probably get a nose job, just for the banter really, you know..."



...If they don't know what they want, how will you?...



...The Brent Cross Gift Card. Available online or in centre"

Figure 1: Hammerson Gift Cards Christmas film for Brent Cross shopping centre (full version)

The film can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/149297280>

The film was supported by printed collateral that continued with the same thought. An image of a Gift Card was seen exploding out of a Christmas cracker, accompanied by the line, “Choice, what a lovely gift to have” and information on where to purchase a Gift Card (both online and in centre).

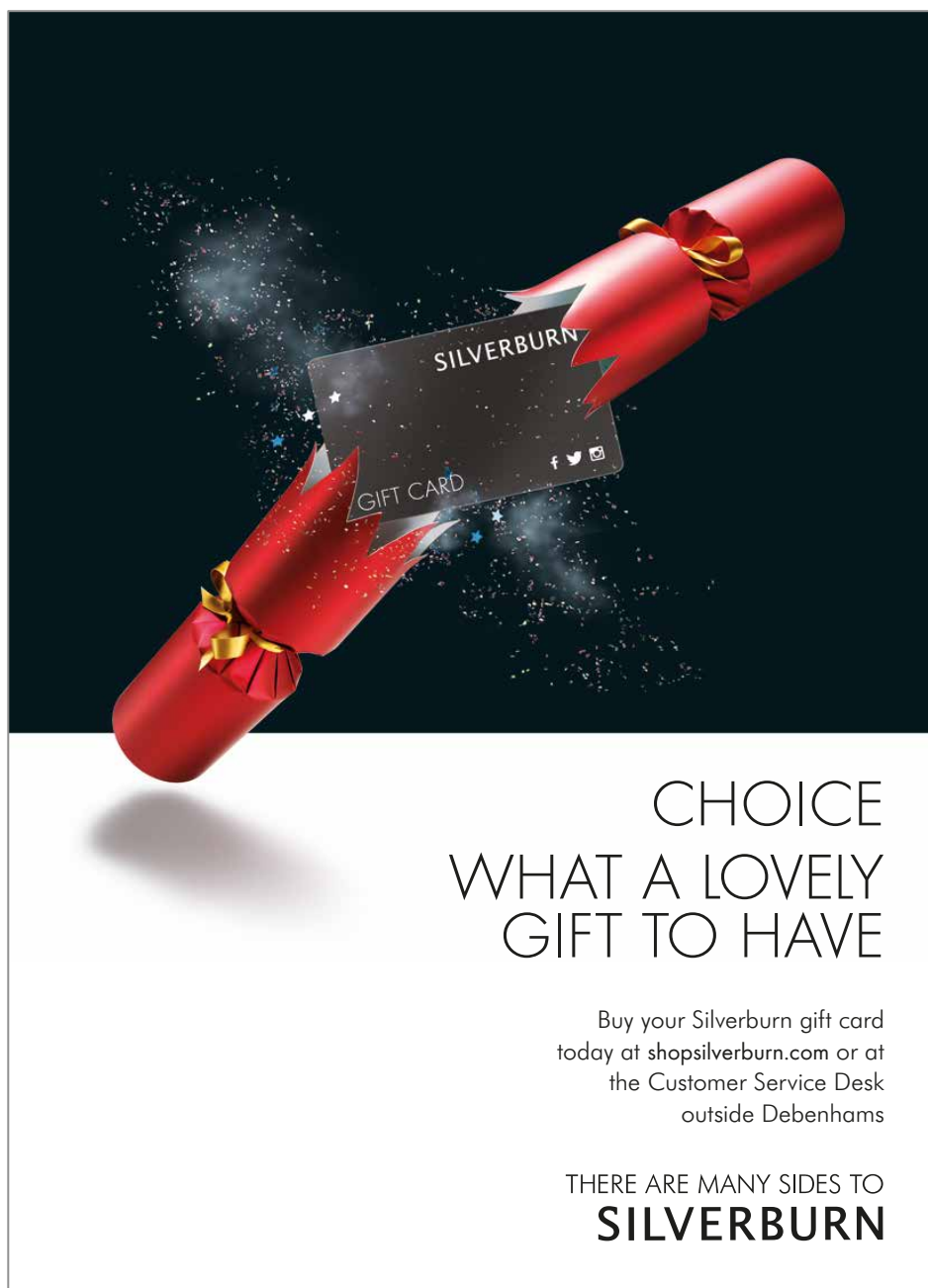


Figure 2: Hammerson Gift Cards Christmas print example

The Gift Card campaign launched on the 16th November 2015 with in-centre posters, wall vinyls and digital screens.

From the 8th December, we seeded our film through social medial channels, posting it on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, as well as on the nine shopping centre websites.

Three versions of the film were created – a 75-second full version and then 30-second and 15-second cut downs. The 30-second version was posted to each of the nine shopping centre’s Facebook pages on

the 9th December and boosted to the fans of the page. On the 15th of December, each centre shared the 15-second version of the film on Instagram.

We decided to boost engagement further by re-sharing the 30-second version of the film on Facebook on 22nd December with a new call-to-action. We posed the question – ‘What is the worst gift fail you have ever received?’ – encouraging viewers to comment on the film for a chance to win a £50 Gift Card.

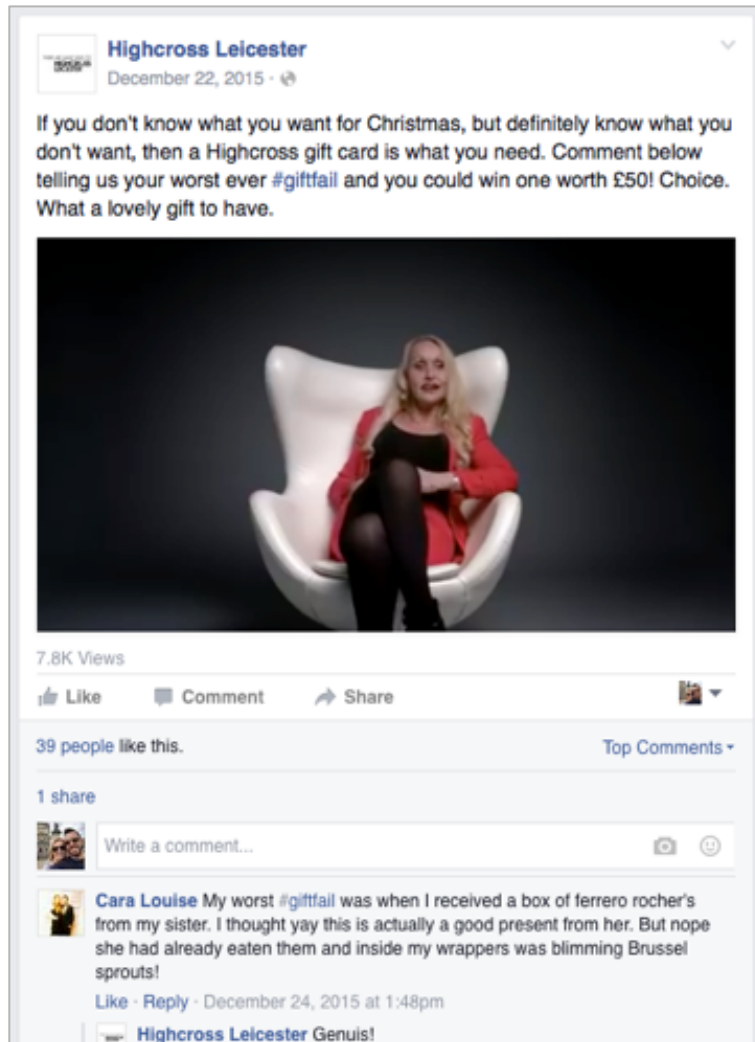


Figure 3: Hammerson Gift Cards Christmas Facebook post example

The new gift of choice

On a tiny budget, our campaign successfully used a human truth to demonstrate the true value of a Hammerson Gift Card.

We created a campaign that could be used across all shopping centres and easily repurposed for other events in 2016. See below for the dialogue from our subsequent films for Mother's Day and Father's Day.

MOTHER'S DAY FILM (30 seconds)

What do you want for Mother's Day?

Woman 1: Um...

Woman 2: Er...

Woman 3: Oo, hmm, I'm not sure about that...

Woman 4: She likes to buy me mugs that say "Mum" on them. I've got six of those – I don't want any more...

Woman 2: Not body lotion, because I've got so many body creams... Um...

Woman 4: A face-lift? A new body? No. Ok, forget it. Um...

If they don't know what they want, how are you to know?

Gift card available online or in centre

Figure 4: Hammerson Gift Cards Mother's Day film

FATHER'S DAY FILM (30 seconds)

What do you want for Father's Day?

Man 1: Er...

Man 2: Um...

Man 3: Probably whisky...

Man 4: A j-cloth, a sponge, a mop...

Man 5: Let me stop and think just for a second...

Man 4: I mean not all cleaning utensils. I'm really fussy...

Man 3: Jewellery, perfume, something for my car... I don't know actually! She doesn't really get me good presents...

If they don't know what they want, how are you to know?

Gift card available online or in centre

Figure 5: Hammerson Gift Cards Father's Day film

We exceeded all of our targets:

1. Sales

SALES VOLUME GROWTH WAS ABOVE TARGET

Growth (Nov/Dec 2014-15)	Target
+10.5%	+ 9.0%

SALES VALUE GROWTH WAS ABOVE TARGET

Growth (Nov/Dec 2014-15)	Target
+13.5%	+10.6%

Given the UK Credit Card and Voucher Association states that the final spend with a Gift Card is +40% of its value, our November-December 2015 total sales value to Hammerson was up 13.9% versus 2014.

2. Engagement

ENGAGEMENT EXCEEDED TARGET

After the initial launch, we reached 71,307 people across all of the shopping centres and had 45,900 views, smashing our target of 20,000 views.

Our engagement boost in late December received 259 entries in answer to the question 'what is the worst gift fail you have ever received?', including some funny stories which will provide useful content in future. (The prize in one shopping centre went to a lady who received a toilet seat as a Christmas present!).

This second burst of activity reached 84,976 people across all shopping centres and achieved 35,720 views. Again, we easily smashed our target of 20,000 views!

Engagement summary for the total campaign:

Total Reach	156,283
Total Views	81,620
Total Comments	233
Total Likes	226

To put these results into context, a major rival put a Gift Card animated post on Facebook in December and received 13,000 views, 23 likes and 0 comments. Our ratio of Likes to Views was 57% better, suggesting our engagement was much stronger.

STRONG RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Looking at the increase in investment and in sales between 2014 and 2015, a ROI of more than 37:1 was achieved, with a £37.84 return on investment for every £1 spent. Hammerson compute ROI by simply

dividing extra sales by the extra marketing budget. Even if we divide the extra sales by two to allow for a typical sales margin, we still achieved a ROI of more than 18:1.

Conclusion

We took a simple human insight to create an emotional campaign for Hammerson Gift Cards that turned a thoughtless, lazy person's gift into a thoughtful one. The campaign delivered exceptional results, all on a tiny budget.

It just goes to show – like small presents, small budgets are often the best!

ⁱ The UK Credit Card and Voucher Association (2015)

ⁱⁱ Store Financial data (Hammerson partner who help run the Gift Card programme)

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://rmbenson.wordpress.com/2013/01/27/a-thoughtless-gift-more-personal-than-cash/>

^{iv} <https://www.lovemoney.com/news/13776/why-gift-vouchers-make-a-bad-christmas-present>