

Christmas ads unwrapped: What marketers can learn from the UK

By [Natalie Botha](#), issued by [Kantar](#)

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The elf on a shelf's view of South Africa's missed festive ad opportunity (ad-pportunity).



'Tis the season to put your feet up and unwind. What better way than by catching up on the stars of this year's Best Christmas Ads in the UK? We'll go beyond the wrapping to unpack what makes festive ads memorable for consumers and successful for advertisers from the eighth year of Kantar's annual UK Christmas TV ad research. They are about so much more than companies trying to get our custom. They are now mini films that tell a story designed to evoke powerful emotions as they make us laugh, cry, and bring smiles to our faces.

There's a reason all the 'build-up' action starts five weeks out in what [many call](#) their ultimate annual Christmas scene-setter, Love Actually. The weekly countdown gets progressively merrier as radio jingles, school concerts and sneaky lunch-hour shopping trips usher in the holiday spirit as people spend less time in office and more time with family. With Eskom putting the kers back in kersfees, fortunately the sunny Saffa festive season is more about braais, beach picnics and flopping around because '[Ke Dezemba](#)'.

The season of festive emotional storytelling however is largely missing from the South African creative calendar, with only a few stand-out festive-themed creatives from retailers and a noteworthy mention for Cadbury, who incidentally is also the UK's star ad of the season.

The ad understands the real human insight of Christmas in South Africa, which is all about going home to spend time with the family, and the beautiful story shares an emotional tale about the journey and the Christmas spirit of giving.

But successful Christmas advertising requires careful balance, Kantar's head of Creative Excellence for the UK, Lynne Deason, tells [Marketing Week](#), "When festive storylines overpower commerciality, brands waste media investment and effectively hand competitors the advantage by not putting their messages front and centre. Use this as a strategic, long-term brand-building piece, not just to evoke those Christmas emotions."

Using LinkExpress on Kantar Marketplace, our team asked 3,750 UK consumers what they thought about 25 of this year's Christmas ads and compared the results to the world's largest advertising database. The research reviewed the critical factors proven to determine whether an ad will be effective, exploring factors such as whether it earns attention, motivates people to buy in the short term and evokes responses that contribute to the brand's success in the longer term.

We then partnered with Affectiva, using facial coding to determine the power of those emotional reactions to see just how Kantar's Best Christmas Ads 2022 cracked the creative effectiveness code. But don't just take my word for it. Grab some popcorn, put your feet up and check out this season's finest ads as well as the ghosts of Christmas ads past:



Natalie Botha, director of Creative Development at Kantar

[Download](#) our infographic and find out which ads performed best, as well as the one that made people smile the most. All utterly enjoyable, emotive, and entertaining, the golden thread of the reel stitches in the basics of creative effectiveness 101: entertaining storytelling as the star of the show, with great creative at its best.

Want to sprinkle some of these gems of jolliness onto South African TV screens next Christmas? Get in touch with the team at chris.nortje@kantar.com to [test your creative on Kantar Marketplace](#) in a flash before you log off for a well-deserved break.

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