

FINALLY... A MISFIT CHRISTMAS AD

By Adam Sheridan and Shaun Dix December 2022

SCREENSHOT: BELVEDERE/YOUTUBE



Christmas is a time of joy and coming together, of exchanging gifts and being with the ones that matter most to us. And while this year Christmas feels a bit different, with inflation and an impending recession to greet us in 2023, another staple we can always count on is Christmas advertising.

This festive jamboree of campaigns has become an event in itself, with some brands even triling them as a movie studio would a tentpole summer blockbuster. In fact, 82% of everyday regular people say they are looking forward to seeing this year's holiday bonanza of ads.¹ And the archetype of this fanfare is John Lewis, now famously known for its emotion evoking and heartstring pulling advertising that delivers a positive experience for audiences and is well-documented for delivering sales and brand growth.²

But since their first ad landed in 2010, we've seen other brands looking to John Lewis as a

type of Christmas advertising playbook. Do we have the emotional and familiar soundtrack? Check. Do we have scenes with children and some animals? Check. Is there a heart-warming and surprising close to the ad with our brand involved? Check.

And the result? A series of warm-hearted moments, all blurring into each other, and not particularly distinct to the advertised brands. A "sea of sameness" that has become a trend in its own right, joining other unwelcome trends in advertising's pantheon, such as COVID-19 and Sustainability. All saying the same thing in the same way.

So, imagine our joy when as the resident Christmas advertising Grinches we came across an ad launched at this time of year that is, well, a bit different. **Belvedere Vodka Presents Daniel Craig**, directed by Academy Award-winning New Zealand filmmaker, actor and comedian, Taika Waititi.

Belvedere “Starring Daniel Craig”



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekESZln4y18

In the ad, the actor Daniel Craig is seen dancing and a grabs a bottle, spinning it on the floor, he dances some more and... that’s about it. He dances, he prances, he wiggles around without a care in the world to an upbeat tune, produced by Rita Ora & Giggs. And it ends with Craig raising a glass to the camera, saying “Finally”.

The end. No specific claims about the ingredients and taste of Belvedere Vodka, no messages, no information, just a fun, whimsical dance bookended by a raise of a glass. Or is it more than that, a glass half full? Perhaps it is not such a coincidence that Daniel Craig has retired from being James Bond and can “finally be himself”. If so, this is cleverly timed.

While not referencing Christmas, the ad certainly has a place in the Christmas fanfare, at the top of the tree, or as the ultimate New Year’s celebration ad, lighting up social media, at the time of publishing with an impressive 3.5M views on YouTube. Based on this view count, it is clearly content people are enjoying and seeking out. The question is, does it have the potential to drive sales and grow the Belvedere Vodka brand?

HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT IN SHIFTING BOTTLES OF BELVEDERE VODKA?

To answer that question, we evaluated the ad with our best-in-class advertising evaluation solution, Creative**Spark**, amongst a sample of people who drink alcohol spirits. And the results indicate spectacularly strong creative effects for Belvedere. In fact, it achieved the strongest performance we have ever observed in the US.

With such a strong performance for an ad that is arguably nearer to a music video than a promotional commercial, we need to ask, why did it perform so well? Belvedere themselves call out on their YouTube channel that the ad shows Daniel Craig “as he has never been seen before”, and likely this is part of its charm and appeal. As an actor so synonymous with the brooding, serious character of James Bond, seeing him in such a light-hearted

and self-deprecating video has certainly not been seen before, and may well have contributed to its virality and earned media value for the brand.

Belvedere - Creative Effect Index



Source: Ipsos CreativeSpark ad evaluation solution amongst sample of n=150 P12M drinkers of clear alcohol spirits

But perhaps there is more to the appeal and performance of this ad than showing the unexpected? Perhaps we need to look more closely to the most important reason for its performance, the experience delivered to the audience.

In Ipsos' recently published book, *MISFITS: How creativity in advertising can spark brand growth*³, we identify that advertising that delivers a unique, entertaining Creative Experience underpinned with Empathy for its audience is most likely to contribute to strong sales effects for brands. We call these types of ads MISFIT advertising, and we can see that the ad for Belvedere is very much the archetypal MISFIT.

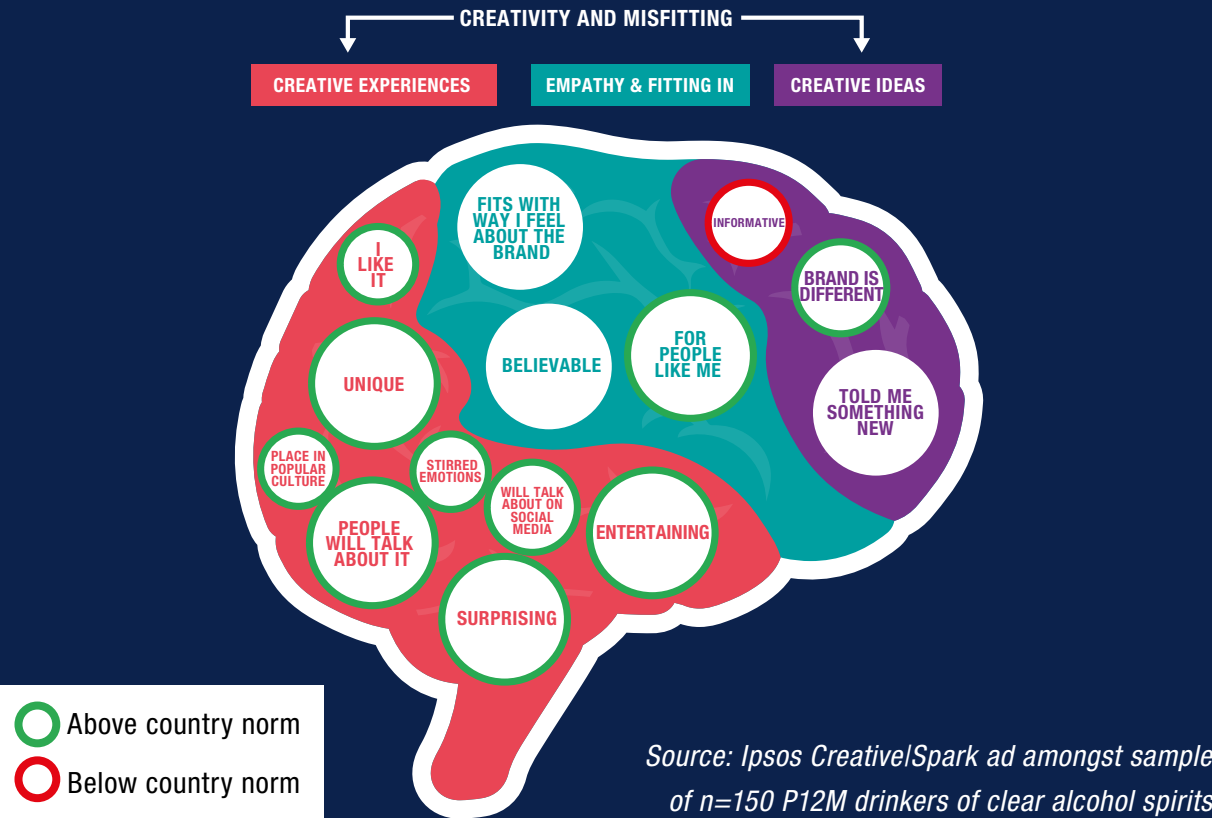
With this ad, we see an example that entertainment via a Creative Experience can be a key to unlock sales effects, but why did people

feel it was empathetic to them? Likely most of us have not danced and pranced through the halls of mansions and hotels, but we can point to the feeling and tone the ad expressed, which was simple, whimsical fun. The type of carefree fun one would hope to have when having a drink, and we can see from comments from people that they loved this tonality and the unique spin it put on what in clear spirits is typically positioned as a serious, sophisticated choice:

"It was kind of weird to see Daniel Craig dancing like that but it's Daniel Craig. So, it's fine."

"This a great ad full of different and unique moments. This ad makes you laugh and want to go buy Belvedere vodka."

"I absolutely love the ad. It was enjoyable to watch and brought me joy."



IS IT REALLY THAT DIFFERENT?

After seeing the ad, the people in our sample certainly felt it was unique, but can we consider that it is truly a one of a kind, never seen experience? On one level, yes. The counter-intuitive sight of Daniel Craig dancing in such a carefree manner has not been seen before, though coming back to the experience delivered, perhaps this whimsical, fun tone is not that new, and it represents more of an evolution of effective campaigns in the drinks category?

There is certainly evidence to suggest this campaign follows a trend of creative and effective work in its lack of meaning and information and more in its feeling of inexplicable fun. And we need look no further than the Cannes Lions Creative Marketer of the Year in 2022, AB InBev. With creativity hard-wired into the DNA of its process and work, AB InBev has birthed a steady stream of carefree, fun advertising that has delivered strong sales effects. One such example is the Dilly Dilly campaign for Bud Light. The context of medieval knights of the realm shouting “Dilly Dilly” is simultaneously absurd and brilliant. It makes no sense, yet it makes complete sense, adding new language to popular culture and delivering simple, blissful fun.

Bud Light “Dilly Dilly”



www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Nt1Hrgjvel&t=361s

Another famous example from AB InBev is their Whassup? campaign for Budweiser. A similarly fun and off-beat experience, again contributing to popular culture with new language and social currency for its audience. This campaign was also measured to be effective, leading to significant increases in volumes of barrels shipped.⁴ And it has longevity and value for AB InBev and audiences until this day, having been brought back during the COVID-19 pandemic with the twist of “*staying at home and having a Bud*”.

Budweiser “Whassup”



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikkg4NobV_w

Southern Comfort is another drinks brand that benefited from delivering a carefree, fun experience in their Beach campaign in 2012, subsequently halting market share declines of previous years.⁵ In this ad we see a man who is not the typical mascot of a spirit brand. Instead of sophistication and an enviable physique, he is middle-aged, strutting across the sand in swimming trunks rather too small for his frame. But it works. He walks without a care in the world, and we have fun with him along the way.

Finally, Heineken did this brilliantly in 2011 with “The Entrance”, a global campaign that

Southern Comfort “Beach”



www.youtube.com/watch?v=auWP-wlzQKI

generated 4 million hits on YouTube in just three weeks, acting as the start of the “Open Your World” campaign for Heineken. The film was premiered on Facebook fan pages at the end of 2010 (with 900,000 hard core Heineken fans) and then went to TV and cinema in a wider paid media campaign. The ad demonstrates the ultimate party entrance for a character ending with him getting on stage performing with the Danish band, The Asteroids Galaxy Tour.

With these campaigns we then see an established trend in the drinks category, where simple fun

Heineken “The Entrance”



www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEsaocaNixM

devoid of rational messages and information can deliver an entertaining experience for audiences and strong sales effects. This is not to detract from the strong performance and audience experience Belvedere delivers, only that we should note that it continues to provide evidence for the value of simple, carefree fun and that with Craig’s performance being counter to his James Bond persona, it executes this strategy in unique way. And perhaps a touch of magic allowed the stars to align, timing Daniel Craig’s retirement from his James Bond duties and that finally he could be himself, even with his initials in his teeth.

SCREENSHOT: BELVEDERE/YOUTUBE

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So, why should we celebrate the Belvedere Vodka ad? On the one hand, because it is effective, and likely the marketing team from LVMH and the creative agency will be raising a glass (of Belvedere Vodka) to the positive audience responses and strong sales effects potential we have measured. Moreover though, it is a reminder of the power of being a MISFIT. Of taking a chance with what on paper must have seemed a fanciful idea of having James Bond dance and prance around without the warm blanket of landing a certain number of rational claims or product information. And it worked beautifully, bringing joy

to its audience, and giving them the promise of fun that Belvedere can successfully deliver.

Which brings us back to Christmas advertising and the cementing of its position as true MISFIT advertising. That in a sea of saccharine sameness of brands all vying to pull our Christmas heartstrings, these advertising Grinches are grateful to see a brand remind us that Christmas can also be about simple, carefree fun. And perhaps in these tough times that is of more value to end audiences and in turn particularly effective for Belvedere Vodka.

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SOURCES:

1. CreativeSpark ad tests in USA, UK and Switzerland (n=1,200 respondents)
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