

Digital Marketing Fundamentals

OMCP's Official Guide to OMCA™ Certification



Greg Jarboe, Matt Bailey, Michael Stebbins
with Brad Geddes, Kim Krause Berg, and Cindy Krum
Foreword by Avinash Kaushik

WILEY

Digital Marketing Fundamentals

Digital Marketing Fundamentals

OMCP's Official Guide to OMCA™ Certification

Greg Jarboe, Matt Bailey, Michael Stebbins
with Brad Geddes, Kim Krause Berg, and Cindy Krum

Foreword by Avinash Kaushik

WILEY

Copyright © 2023 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.

Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 750-4470, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permission>.

Trademarks: Wiley and the Wiley logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and other countries and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Further, readers should be aware that websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Neither the publisher nor authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

For general information on our other products and services or for technical support, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

If you believe you've found a mistake in this book, please bring it to our attention by emailing our reader support team at wileysupport@wiley.com with the subject line "Possible Book Errata Submission."

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic formats. For more information about Wiley products, visit our web site at www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Jarboe, Greg, 1949-author. | Bailey, Matt, 1969-author. | Stebbins, Michael, 1971-author.

Title: Digital marketing fundamentals: omcp's official guide to omcatm certification / Greg Jarboe, Matt Bailey, Michael Stebbins.

Description: First Edition. | Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, [2023] | Includes index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022053833 (print) | LCCN 2022053834 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119894575 (paperback) | ISBN 9781119894612 (adobe pdf) | ISBN 9781119894605 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Internet marketing. | Marketing--Data processing.

Classification: LCC HF5415.1265.J3697 2023 (print) | LCC HF5415.1265 (ebook) | DDC 658.8/72—dc23/eng/20221104

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022053833>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022053834>

Cover Design: Wiley

Cover Image: © davooda/Shutterstock

Contents

FOREWORD vii

INTRODUCTION ix

- 1 Digital Marketing Strategy 1**
- 2 Digital Marketing Analytics 49**
- 3 Digital Advertising 83**
- 4 Search Engine Optimization 129**
- 5 Content Marketing 167**
- 6 Social Media Marketing 219**
- 7 Conversion Optimization 273**
- 8 Mobile Marketing 299**
- 9 Email Marketing 343**
- 10 Careers and Hiring 371**

DIGITAL MARKETING GLOSSARY 401

REFERENCES 415

ABOUT THE AUTHORS 423

INDEX 427

Foreword

Almost 20 years ago I postulated the 10/90 Rule for Digital Marketing: If you have \$100 to spend on being successful, spend \$10 on tools and \$90 on people!

Since then, this rule has only become truer, as free tools for every digital task have proliferated and others have become cheaper. What remains expensive are the smart people that you need to successfully imagine competitive strategies, convert them into effective marketing tactics, and measure what matters.

I'm super-excited about OMCP, since it is a program that offers a high-quality signal reflecting knowledge and experience. You know...it helps answer whether this human is the right investment for your \$90.

Hence, I'm thrilled that Greg, Matt, and Michael decided to write the biblical guide to OMCA certification. Their knowledge spans strategy, brand and performance marketing, comprehensive guidance on digital analytics, crucial areas like SEO, digital advertising, content marketing, social media marketing, as well as conversion optimization, email marketing, and mobile marketing! Each chapter has the detail you need to learn core concepts and pointers on how you can use this book as a jumping-off point into the deep end of any of the topics.

Greg, Matt, and Michael also persuaded Brad, Kim, and Cindy to contribute their wisdom and industry insights, making the book that much more valuable.

Like me, you will read the book to be among those who have the rare honor of earning OMCA certification, but I believe you'll keep it as a handy reference guide at work to look up the guidance you'll need to deliver an out-sized impact.

All the best!

Avinash Kaushik

Author: *Web Analytics: An Hour a Day*, *Web Analytics 2.0*

Digital Marketing Evangelist: Google

Introduction

Who Should Read This Book?

This book is intended for those who will drive digital marketing initiatives, manage digital marketing teams, or communicate digital marketing concepts. It is perfect for those who are transitioning into a career in digital marketing or for students who wish to learn generally accepted practices of digital marketing.

It can also be used as a study guide or to supplement a digital marketer's preparation for OMCA certification. The OMCA certification verifies knowledge across multiple digital marketing disciplines. It is often used as a minimum requirement for marketing team members at advertising agencies or other businesses that perform in-house marketing. Groups who train or hire to OMCA standards lead the industry in digital marketing performance.

Why Get a Digital Marketing Certification?

It's no longer enough to simply claim expertise as a digital marketer. Employers and clients know that they are best served by marketers whose knowledge and skills are current and verified.

According to the 2019 OMCP Role Study, which asked more than 4,000 professionals about their digital marketing priorities, companies and agencies are no longer looking for one-trick ponies. Hiring managers unanimously require employees to have conceptual knowledge and skills across five of the top eight disciplines—search engine optimization, content marketing, social media marketing, digital advertising (including price-per-click), mobile marketing, email marketing, conversion rate optimization, and digital analytics. In addition, subject matter experts must master two or more disciplines as well as digital marketing strategy to be considered for a senior position.

So, whether you are one of the 52,000 individuals preparing for the OMCA exam, 100,000 students trained at more than 900 universities and training institutes that teach to OMCA standards worldwide, or 316,800 advertising, promotions, and marketing managers in the United States, this official guide can help you get a Digital Marketing Certification from OMCP, an industry association that maintains the competency and exam standards for online marketing in coordination with industry leaders from Google, Dell, Microsoft (Bing), Procter & Gamble, Home Depot, and many others.

What Are the Benefits of OMCA Certification?

Individuals who earn the OMCA certification

- stand out to employers and clients as having verified digital marketing skills, education, and experience;
- earn between 16 percent and 26 percent more than noncertified digital marketers; and
- operate more effectively as a marketing professional, sharing common language and generally accepted practices across multiple disciplines.

This book is written by respected authors and members of OMCP's standards committees, past and present. The co-authors and contributors are Greg Jarboe, Matt Bailey, Michael Stebbins, Brad Geddes, Cindy Krum, and Kim Krause Berg.

CHAPTER 1

Digital Marketing Strategy

By Greg Jarboe

It's no longer enough to simply claim expertise as a digital marketer. Employers and clients know that they are best served by marketers whose knowledge and skills are current and certified.

According to the 2019 OMCP Role Study, which asked more than 4,000 hiring managers about their digital marketing priorities, companies and agencies are no longer looking for one-trick ponies. Today, they require employees to have conceptual knowledge and skills across eight disciplines:

- Digital analytics
- Digital advertising (including price-per-click)
- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Content marketing
- Social media marketing
- Conversion optimization (UX)
- Mobile marketing
- Email marketing

This book includes a chapter on each of these disciplines. So, whether you are one of the professionals preparing for the OMCA exam, or one of the students at more than 900 universities and training institutes that teach to OMCA standards worldwide, this official guide can help you get OMCA certification from OMCP, an industry association that maintains the competency and exam standards for digital marketing in coordination with industry leaders.

Is digital marketing certification worth it? Well, individuals who earn the OMCA certification

- stand out to employers and clients as having verified digital marketing skills, education, and experience,
- earn between 16 percent and 26 percent more than noncertified digital marketers, and
- operate more effectively as a marketing professional, sharing common language and generally accepted practices across multiple disciplines.

The 2019 OMCP Role Study also found that the industry’s marketing leaders wanted the addition of digital marketing strategy as its own discipline. Although there are no OMCP competencies for digital marketing strategy yet, that’s the challenge this chapter will tackle.

By the end of this chapter, you will have accomplished the following:

- Learned some of the lessons that other fast-moving consumer goods and consumer packaged goods brands have learned from the struggles of Kraft Heinz
- Discovered what other retail brands in the U.K. have observed just by watching the annual Christmas adverts created by John Lewis & Partners and Adam & Eve/DDB
- Will understand how to use the modern marketing model (M3) as a framework to develop an effective digital marketing strategy for your organization

You will also learn why creating an effective digital marketing strategy is a challenge. There are three key reasons:

- There is no “one-size-fits-all” way to build an audience.
- Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory.
- Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.

I’ll tackle each one of these challenges in this chapter so that you can overcome them successfully.

There Is No “One-Size-Fits-All” Way to Build an Audience

Here’s the first key reason why teaching digital marketing strategy is a challenge: In the 19th century, John Stuart Mill said, “There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’

way to build an audience.” In the 21st century, digital marketers have discovered that there is no “one-size-fits-all” way to

- create brand awareness,
- build credibility/trust,
- educate audience(s),
- build loyalty with existing clients/customers,
- generate demand/leads,
- nurture subscribers/audience/leads,
- drive attendance to one or more in-person or virtual events,
- generate sales/revenue,
- support the launch of a new product, or
- build a subscribed audience.

These are all goals that B2B (business-to-business) and B2C (business-to-consumer) marketers have successfully achieved by using content marketing in the last 12 months, according to the “12th Annual Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends: Insights for 2022” report produced by Content Marketing Institute and Marketing Profs. And content marketing is just one of the top eight disciplines of digital marketing.

So what is the best digital marketing strategy for successfully achieving these goals?

There isn’t a simple answer to this frequently asked question. Why? Because your company is unique, your customers are unique, and your competitors are unique, too. So one size does not fit all.

Using AnswerThePublic to “listen into” autocomplete data from Google and other search engines, I recently discovered that people in Great Britain are asking about a “digital marketing strategy” for . . . a brand, a hotel, a product, a restaurant, a startup, airlines, app, automotive industry, B2B, B2C, banks, beauty salon, beginners, brand awareness, business, business growth, cafe, cement industry, charities, clothing brand, coaching institutes, coffee shop, colleges, construction company, consumer goods, cosmetics, dairy products, dentists, detergent, doctors, ecommerce, ecommerce website, edtech, educational institutes, event management, events, example crossword, example crossword clue, Facebook, fashion, fashion brands, financial services, FMCG, food products, furniture company, grocery, gym, healthcare, higher education, hospitals, hotels, HR, ice cream, Instagram, insurance companies, interior design, IT companies, jewelry brand, law firms, lead generation, local business, logistics companies, luxury brands, manufacturers, manufacturing industry, mobile app, movies, new brand, new business, new product launch, newspapers, NGO, nonprofit, online business, online store, organization, pharmaceutical, pharmaceutical companies, pharmacy,

photographers, political campaigns, preschool, product launch, professionals, radio stations, real estate, recruitment agency, resort, restaurants, SaaS, schools, service industry, small business, social media, software companies, startups, technology companies, tourism, travel agency, university, video, website, and wedding planners.

In other words, people are asking about more digital marketing strategies than there are unique pizza toppings!

Until OMCP can develop the digital marketing strategy standards for training providers and standardized testing, most of the co-authors and contributors to this book have been using illustrative case studies to provide marketing professionals and students with an up-close, in-depth, and detailed examination of a specific digital marketing strategy as well as its related contextual conditions.

Professors at Harvard Business School (HBS) have been using “the case method” since 1921. Central to the case method is the idea that students aren’t provided the “answer” to the problem. Instead, the student is forced to analyze a situation and find solutions without full knowledge of all the facts. The case method has been the most widely applied and successful teaching instrument to come out of HBS, and it is used in hundreds of other top business schools around the world.

For example, a couple of years ago, I was a member of a team of subject matter experts who taught a bespoke (custom) digital marketing training program for marketers at a Fortune 500 company in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and consumer-packaged goods (CPG) industries.

We selected case studies that offered relevant sets of circumstances. Why is this important? Because the typical case study may offer interesting information, but it often doesn’t teach useful lessons to marketers in different fields.

Since the marketing team that we were training wanted to see case studies from other companies in their field, I shared a case study that analyzed the failure of a company in the FMCG and CPG industries.

With permission from *Search Engine Journal*, the next section contains a lightly edited version of what I wrote back on July 12, 2019, and shared during the bespoke digital marketing training program.

Kraft Heinz: Isn’t Anyone Going to Help That Poor Brand?

According to Mark Ritson of *Marketing Week*, “Kraft Heinz is in 57 varieties of trouble,” which is a real pity. The American food company formed in 2015 by the merger of Kraft Foods and H. J. Heinz is the fifth-largest food and beverage company in the world with 2018 net sales of approximately \$26 billion.

Ritson, an award-winning marketing columnist, professor, and consultant in the United Kingdom, thinks Kraft Heinz is suffering from a number of self-inflicted wounds, from underinvestment in its brands to a failure to adapt its portfolio to modern tastes.

However, no company aims to inflict wounds on itself, so that explanation is too clever by half.

It reminds me of the scene in *Blazing Saddles* when Sheriff Bart takes himself hostage by pressing his gun against his own head, prompting Harriet Johnson to cry out, “Isn’t anyone going to help that poor man?”

YouTube and Kraft Heinz: A Strategic Threat and Opportunity Even though it may be too late, I’m going to help that poor brand. Again.

Yes, I’ve tried to help before.

Back in March 2015, I took a look at the combined Kraft Heinz Company’s YouTube channels for Tubular Insights and was surprised to see “an archipelago of small, isolated islands. Considering the high percentage of Millennials who eat up YouTube food videos, this represented both a strategic threat AND a strategic opportunity for the food giant.”

So, did they heed my advice? Judge for yourself.

Back in Q1 2015, YouTube videos uploaded by Kraft Heinz Company brands got a total of 8.4 million views, according to data from Tubular Labs.

But that was a minuscule percentage of the 2.7 billion views amassed by all of the brands in the food and beverage during industry that quarter.

In Q1 2019, the Kraft Heinz Company’s brands got a total of 57.2 million views on YouTube. At first glance, that appears to be significant progress.

But all of the brands in the food and beverage industry got 10.2 billion combined views during this quarter, so any gains seem like a rounding error.

So, four years later, YouTube remains both a strategic threat and a strategic opportunity for Kraft Heinz.

Recently, I’ve been a subject matter expert for a bespoke, online digital marketing training program for a Fortune 500 company in the FMCG and CPG industries. I can say without violating my nondisclosure agreement that big companies in these sectors on both sides of the pond have struggled to make a smooth transition from the old world of television advertising in the 20th century to the new world of digital marketing in the 21st century.

What Went Wrong? So, why did Kraft Heinz and other FMCG and CPG companies continue to struggle longer and later than many other companies in most other industries?

Well, they were probably using the wrong metrics as key performance indicators (KPIs). In other words, they were measuring the wrong things.

When you measure the wrong things, you mistakenly think you're reaching your business goals and marketing objectives. But, more often than not, you're getting into 57 varieties of trouble.

Let me share my scientific, wild guess on exactly which metric got Kraft Heinz and far too many other FMCG and CPG companies into 57 varieties of trouble. They have continued to measure success using a metric that was created in the 1950s during the TV era: gross rating points (GRPs).

GRPs measure the size of an advertising campaign by potential impressions using a problematic formula that multiplies estimated reach by frequency.

For example, if you run a commercial five times on a TV show that reaches 7 percent of your target audience, then you get 35 GRPs.

That appears to be a metric that matters because it's been used for decades. But in real life, most of the people in this small segment of your target audience probably ignored your TV spot the fourth and fifth time that it appeared.

Some may have even been annoyed that the same commercial kept popping up so many times during the same bloody show. And this assumes that seeing your advertising the first three times increased your sales to some degree.

Maybe it did.

But maybe it didn't.

As David Ogilvy (1985) wrote in his classic book, *Ogilvy on Advertising*, "The wrong advertising can actually reduce the sales of a product" (p. 9).

He then cited two studies to support his provocative conclusion. In the first, Ford marketing research found that "people who had not been exposed to (their) advertising had bought more Fords than those who had." In the second, consumption of an unnamed brand of beer "was lower among people who remembered its advertising than those who did not. The brewer had spent millions of dollars on advertising which un-sold his beer" (Ogilvy 1985).

So, GRPs measure how many impressions you've purchased, not how your target audience responds to your advertising.

In other words, GRPs measure inputs, not outcomes.

That's why, despite the fact that they've been used since the 1950s as metrics for TV advertising, GRPs shouldn't be used today as KPIs for digital marketing.

Which Metrics Should Kraft Heinz Use as KPIs? This begs the question: Which metrics should Kraft Heinz use as KPIs?

The vast majority of most FMCGs and CPGs will continue to be sold through brick-and-mortar stores for the foreseeable future.

This kind of explains why it took longer for Kraft Heinz and other companies that still rely on retail channels of distribution to embrace digital marketing. But it only sort of explains why they didn't question some of the

assumptions that their college professors, marketing predecessors, and advertising agencies had made in an analog era when it came time for them to decide which metrics to use as KPIs in the digital age.

Brand Lift For example, more marketers at FMCG and CPG companies should have noticed a speech in February 2013 by Susan Wojcicki, who was the senior vice president of advertising at Google back then.

In her speech, she announced that Google was launching *brand lift* surveys. These enabled marketers to measure the impact of their YouTube ads on metrics such as the following:

- Ad recall
- Brand awareness
- Favorability
- Consideration
- Purchase intent

This is possible by using surveys of a randomized control group that was not shown your ad and an exposed group that did see your ad.

You’d think that some of the marketers at Kraft Foods would have spotted the Mondelez International case study published in Think with Google in October 2014. Why? Because the snack brands of Mondelez were once part of Kraft Foods until they were spun off in October 2012.

The case study explained how Mondelez used Google’s brand lift solution to measure the marketing effectiveness of the launches of its *belVita* and *Trident Unlimited* brands in Brazil.

Here’s the story behind the success story: Brand lift revealed valuable insights into the campaigns’ viewer retention rates, target audiences, and frequency caps. Based on these findings, the marketers at Mondelez quickly adjusted the company’s targeting and its creatives within days and saw its YouTube campaigns lift brand awareness of its apple-and-cinnamon breakfast biscuit by 26 percent and its gum brand by 36 percent.

Now, brand lift is an infinitely better KPI than some random number of GRPs. If you have any doubt about this assertion, then ask your college professor, marketing predecessor, or ad agency, “How many GRPs do we need to lift our brand awareness by 26 percent or 36 percent?”

As you’ve already figured out, this is a trick question—because there are no known correlations between GRPs and lifts in brand awareness.

Sales Lift But wait, there’s more!

In January 2019, YouTube and Nielsen Catalina Solutions announced a new way to measure sales lift. So marketers at Kraft Heinz can now measure,

in aggregate, how effective their YouTube campaigns are at moving products off of store shelves in the United States.

That's both a strategic opportunity AND a strategic threat.

With more than 2 billion logged-in users visiting YouTube each month, the strategic opportunity is obvious. But the strategic threat is obvious too.

Marketers at other FMCG and CPG companies are already using the combination of brand lift and sales lift studies to measure their digital advertising campaigns.

They're also using tools like YouTube Director Mix to create customized video ads and serve them to suit the interests and intent of different audience segments. This means marketers can customize a base video asset with relevant creative elements, including the following:

- Headlines
- Images
- Prices
- Translations

Then, the video and these elements are stitched together, produced quickly and at scale, reducing the need for endless edits. This results in hundreds of video variations in relatively little time with relatively little effort.



FIGURE 1.1 YouTube Presents: Kellogg's Rice Krispies Treats Case Study (<https://youtu.be/zzdujh5LG80>)

For example, Kellogg’s used YouTube Director Mix, Google Correlate, and six-second bumper ads to reintroduce Rice Krispies Treats to parents across the country during the busy and emotional back-to-school season.

They used Director Mix to bring their new packaging to life online with more than 100 customized videos. In the end, the campaign drove best in class brand lift and sales lift, despite fewer retail displays (Figure 1.1).

Selecting the Right KPIs Is the Key Being able to measure brand lift and sales lift doesn’t mean that marketers at Kraft Heinz or other FMCG and CPG brands will be able to create the perfect digital advertising campaign their first time out.

However, if they’ve selected the right metrics as KPIs and are finally measuring the right things, they will learn what they need to do to improve their results in days, not years.

Or as Avinash Kaushik, who is an author, a blogger, and the digital marketing evangelist for Google, wrote on LinkedIn in May 2018, “Companies set inspiring goals. They tend to want to constantly exceed the (often less-than-optimally informed) expectations of Wall Street analysts. They tend to invite motivational speakers to get the employees to think differently, push through to new frontiers, CHANGE THE WORLD!!!!”

He added, “I completely understand this pattern. Who does not want to shoot for the moon or massively exceed their mom’s expectations? [But,] I’ve come to learn that this desire to overachieve also comes at a very heavy cost—it drives sub-optimal behavior. Instead, I recommend this as the #1 goal for your company: Suck less, every day. Whatever you do today, consciously suck less at it.”

Although I gasped when I first read his article, I later wished that I had written it myself. It’s the perfect advice for a poor brand that’s in 57 varieties of trouble. And it’s great advice for other FMCG and CPG brands too.

Apply What You Just Learned

To assess whether the marketers at the Fortune 500 company that we were training could apply what they had just learned, our team of subject matter experts assigned a capstone project. We broke them into teams and gave them a couple of weeks to develop a new digital marketing strategy.

Because the marketing teams were located in multiple countries around the globe and worked on a variety of goods and products, we told them they could create a digital marketing strategy for their own market or brand. This ensured that the online training course wasn’t a distraction from their day jobs.

The quality of their capstone projects indicated that the marketing teams could apply what they had just learned. And a series of recent interviews with senior leadership verifies that our bespoke digital marketing training program had also helped the company to pivot after the coronavirus pandemic dramatically affected consumers and brands around the world.

From 2020 to 2021, the Fortune 500 company improved its return on marketing investment by more than 70 percent. But it didn't improve overnight.

They achieved this remarkable success over 2 years by rethinking measurement, exploring actionable solutions to help their company gain deeper insights, creating growth opportunities, redefining budgets, being more agile, and building resilience for the future.

The key to their success was selecting the right metrics as KPIs so they were finally measuring the right things. Then they were able to learn what they need to do to improve their results. And that enabled them to suck less, every day.

I know this still sounds like it took a lot of time and effort. Because it did. This is just one reason why creating an effective digital marketing strategy is a challenge.

Strategy Without Tactics Is the Slowest Route to Victory

This brings us to the second key reason why an effective digital marketing strategy is a challenge: far too many CMOs are under tremendous pressure to create a brilliant marketing strategy that will deliver spectacular results in the short term.

You need at least a concept-level understanding of digital analytics, digital advertising, SEO, content marketing, social media marketing, conversion optimization, mobile marketing, and email marketing before you are ready to develop a digital marketing strategy for your organization.

Or as Sun Tzu, a Chinese general, military strategist, writer, and philosopher who lived in ancient China, observed about 2,500 years ago, "Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory."

Let me illustrate this by sharing a second case study that analyzes the 2021 Christmas advert from John Lewis & Partners, a brand of high-end department stores operating throughout Great Britain, with concessions also located in the Republic of Ireland and Australia.

The brand sells general merchandise as part of the employee-owned mutual organization known as the John Lewis Partnership, the largest co-operative in the United Kingdom.

The first John Lewis store was opened in 1864 in Oxford Street, London. Since 1925, the chain has promised that it is “never knowingly undersold”—it will always at least match a lower price offered by a national high street competitor.

With permission from *Search Engine Journal*, the following section contains a lightly edited version of the column that I wrote on December 8, 2021.

Nostalgia Marketing and What We Can Learn From John Lewis Ads

You’ve probably noticed an influx of seasonal television advertising campaigns by retail brands in the build-up to Christmas. These spots tend to attract widespread media coverage and acclaim upon their release. Just look at department store brand John Lewis & Partners, which launched their first Christmas advert back in 2007.

Their nostalgic ads have become something of an annual tradition in the United Kingdom, and one of the signals that the countdown to Christmas has begun. In 2011, John Lewis uploaded their Christmas advert to YouTube for the first time.

Since then, the British department store chain and its London-based agency, Adam & Eve/DDB, have followed suit each and every year. Judging by the quality of ads other brands in the United Kingdom have been releasing this past decade, they may have learned some important lessons from those John Lewis spots.

Let’s take a look at how these brands are effectively harnessing the power of nostalgia marketing and what you can learn from them to make it a part of your own marketing strategy.

What Is Nostalgia Marketing? Nostalgia marketing is the strategy of evoking a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, in order to build brands for the future. It’s the tactic of associating your company with a period or place that triggers happy personal associations for your ideal customer, for the purpose of marketing goods and products in the present.

Why Nostalgia Marketing Works So Well Nostalgia marketing typically works well because the psychological response triggered by watching a deeply nostalgic video tends to be intense, since it is influenced by the viewer’s own positive emotions and memories. Nostalgic content also makes advertising campaigns appear more down-to-earth and authentic to the audience.

However, John Lewis may (or may not) have learned what works (and what doesn’t).

TABLE 1.1 Tubular Labs Data on YouTube Views and Engagements of John Lewis Christmas Ads

Title of Video	Views	Engagements
John Lewis Christmas Advert 2011—The Long Wait	8.3M	43K
John Lewis Christmas Advert 2012—The Journey	7.0M	35K
John Lewis Christmas Advert 2013—The Bear & The Hare	17.7M	124K
John Lewis Christmas Advert 2014—#MontyThePenguin	27.8M	130K
John Lewis Christmas Advert 2015—#ManOnTheMoon	30.4M	163K
John Lewis Christmas Advert 2016—#BusterTheBoxer	28.3M	123K
John Lewis Christmas Ad 2017—#MozTheMonster	10.6M	77K
John Lewis & Partners Christmas Ad 2018—#EltonJohnLewis	14.7M	142K
Christmas 2019 Ad John Lewis & Partners and Waitrose & Partners	11.1M	99K
Christmas 2020 Ad Give A Little Love Waitrose & John Lewis	4.7M	34K

As the data in Table 1.1 from Tubular Labs shows, the John Lewis Christmas ads uploaded to YouTube got more views and engagements several years ago than they've received more recently. That was a troublesome trend even before the pandemic turned last Christmas into a season that most high street shops would rather forget!

Google Trends Data for the Christmas Advert You can use Google Trends to learn some surprising lessons about interest in the Christmas advert.

For starters, web search interest in the United Kingdom for the search term “Christmas advert” peaked back in November 2016 and was thereafter likely to be just 38 percent of that level.

But if you narrow the time frame on Google Trends to just the last 30 days, you can scroll down and see that the top-related queries for the search term include the following (Figure 1.2):

- John Lewis Christmas advert (100)
- Aldi Christmas advert (42)
- M&S Christmas advert (20)

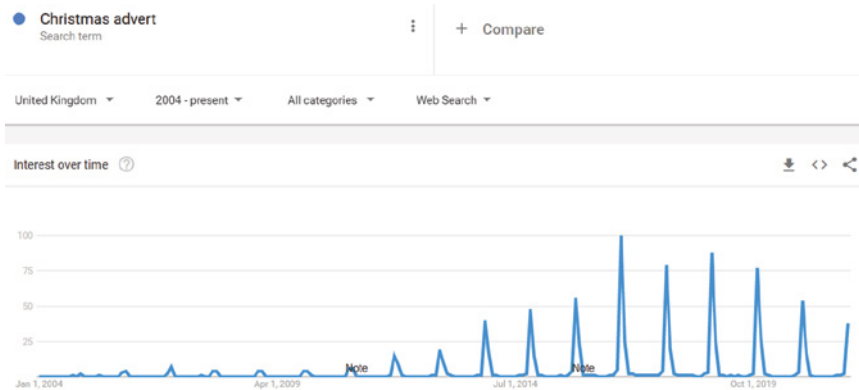


FIGURE 1.2 Google Trends U.K. for Christmas Advert

So people on the other side of the pond are so interested in seeing a brand’s Christmas ad that they actually search for it.

Which Christmas Ads Harness Nostalgia Marketing Effectively In 2021?

Let’s examine some of these Christmas adverts to determine if any of them effectively harnessed nostalgia marketing in 2021.

John Lewis Ad’s Content Doesn’t Live Up to Viewers’ High Expectations

We’ll start with “Unexpected Guest | John Lewis & Partners | Christmas Ad 2021.”

The description of this YouTube video asks, “What happens when an unexpected guest lands in your forest? You show them how Christmas is done, of course!”

John Lewis has created a ton of related content. Maybe they have been learning some important lessons over the years. For example, there’s an extended version of “Unexpected Guest.” And there’s a related page on their website that provides the backstory of the “Unexpected Guest.” There’s also a behind-the-scenes article and video on the making of “Unexpected Guest.”

It seems like John Lewis has learned a lesson about merchandising. Why? Because the brand’s website includes content about the special Christmas jumper, customized with a star and twinkly lights, that Nathan gives Skye. Plus, John Lewis is donating 10 percent of the sales from their Christmas advert jumper to support families in need.

There’s also content about decorating the tree—with links to “Shop in the Gemstone Forest” and “Shop all Christmas decorations.” There’s additional content about setting the table too, with links to “Shop the advert table look” and “Shop all Christmas tableware.”

There’s even a new interactive game, “Unexpected Guest: The Experience,” which My John Lewis members get exclusive access to play.



FIGURE 1.3 Unexpected Guest | John Lewis & Partners | Christmas Ad 2021 (<https://youtu.be/ZTttgc0DPA4>)

So, everything is queued up to “market goods and products in the present” —as long as the video’s content associates John Lewis “with a period or place with happy personal associations.” (See Figure 1.3.)

How did the brand do? Well, according to data from Tubular Labs, “Unexpected Guest” got 2.5 million views and 17,500 engagements in its first 30 days. That’s a worse start than any of the brand’s other Christmas adverts from the previous decade.

If you read some of the 1,200+ comments on “Unexpected Guest,” you have to wonder if John Lewis has lost its touch for evoking a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past:

- Nature bunny said, “Ah. . . there’s nothing more festive than a crash-landed UFO in the local woods.”
- Wayne Prezzler said, “Let’s be honest. John Lewis will never ever beat the lad waiting to give gifts rather than receiving them. It captured an essence lost and that Christmas is more about the giving of gifts than receiving. I believe it was their first and it was definitely their best ad.”
- Ethan Clarke said, “The 2012 snowman advert is still the best for me.”
- Strong Coffee said, “Monty the Penguin still makes me sob like an idiot. Love the song choice on this though!”
- Edward Osmond said, “Nothing will ever beat the rabbit and the bear.”

John Lewis replied to this last comment. Someone representing the brand said, “Those two certainly pulled on the heart strings! But glad you like Nathan and Skye’s story too.”

Key Insights

- It appears that nostalgia marketing still works. Tying your company to a period or place with happy personal associations to market goods and products doesn't work if your video's content fails to trigger that deeply nostalgic psychological response, though.
- Plan supplemental content to get more mileage out of your video ads and enable the experience to go on.

Now, let's evaluate Christmas adverts from some other brands.

Aldi Video Ad Combines Humor with Deeper Emotional Sentiment According to Kantar's latest research using facial coding to determine the power of the ad to provoke an emotional reaction, the most effective of 24 festive adverts was "Aldi Christmas Launch Advert 2021." (See Figure 1.4.)

It's worth noting that the version of this TV ad that was uploaded to YouTube got 2.9 million views and 7,400 engagements.

Featuring Kevin the Carrot for the sixth year in a row, this year's Christmas advert has been Aldi's most successful so far. In fact, it scored in the top 6 percent of all U.K. ads in terms of being both "distinctive" and "enjoyable," and was also the campaign that sparked the most conversation.

The description of Aldi's Christmas advert asks, "Will Ebanana Scrooge discover his Christmas spirit?" Um, who is Ebanana Scrooge? The brand uploaded a teaser for this year's Christmas advert to provide the backstory for this new character.

According to Kantar, Aldi focused on traditional Christmas themes such as kindness and togetherness. Data from their research found that 35 percent of people feel this Christmas is more important than last year, with a particular emphasis on friends and family and less focus on extravagant spending.



FIGURE 1.4 Aldi Christmas Launch Advert 2021 (<https://youtu.be/MIL8KI-r0bo>)

Lynne Deason, head of creative excellence at Kantar, said, “Aldi’s new take on a Christmas classic is a great example of how a brand can convey serious messages about purpose and social impact while still being great fun.

Aldi uses humor effectively, something especially important in a year when we all need an extra laugh, but it also has a deeper sentiment.

The clever inclusion of “Marcus Radishford” highlights a worthy cause—the campaign to provide meals to those in need—without coming across as too somber to viewers.

And by borrowing from one of the most well-known and loved Christmas stories of all time, it sets out a complicated narrative without ever being confusing.”

Key Insights

- The most successful Christmas ads in 2021 captured a positive mood while making the ads highly relevant to their brands and products.
- Those that struggled to get resonance have been the ones with sad or complex storylines, where the intended happy ending doesn’t stand out or the audience is left feeling confused.

Marks & Spencer Uses Character and Storyline to Elicit Emotion Another standout campaign was “Percy Pig comes to life for the first time EVER! | 2021 Christmas Advert | M&S FOOD.” (See Figure 1.5.)

In addition, Percy Pig along with his fairy friend discover the delicious delights of the Marks & Spencer festive foodhall, from triple chocolate panetone to collection smoked salmon. This video has 1.8 million views and 7,200 engagements.

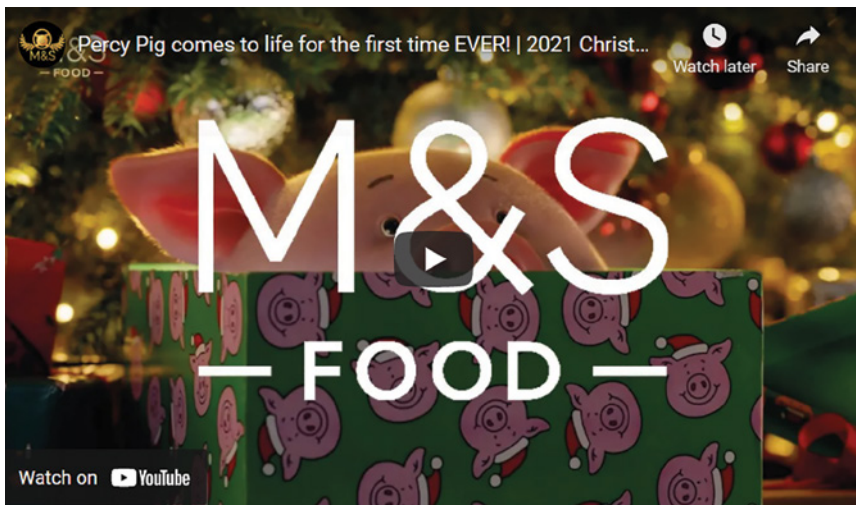


FIGURE 1.5 Percy Pig Comes to Life for the First Time EVER! | 2021 Christmas Advert | M&S FOOD (<https://youtu.be/Dlem-MOMZOs>)

Much like Aldi, Marks & Spencer relied on the help of “recognizable” characters, a tactic that proved effective in linking messages and storylines with brand names.

In this case, Marks & Spencer leaned on its well-loved and highly recognizable Percy Pig voiced by English actor Tom Holland, and the “fairy that fell off the top of the Christmas tree” voiced by British actress Dawn French.

Key Insights

- According to Kantar, the characters created a greater emotional reaction among audiences than previous years’ ads from the brand, contributing to its increased effectiveness.
- Familiarity—in characters, voiceovers, and other storyline elements—supports nostalgia marketing.

Coca-Cola Has Brand Loyalty and Connection on Its Side I asked Deason, “Which brand was the most effective at harnessing the power of nostalgia?”

She said, “Coca-Cola’s ad is by far the most nostalgic Christmas ad, achieving iconic status in the minds of many.” (See Figure 1.6.)

The version of this TV ad that was uploaded to YouTube, “Coca-Cola Christmas Commercial 2021,” is unlisted, which explains why it only got 2,573 views and 22 engagements.



FIGURE 1.6 Coca-Cola Christmas Commercial 2021 (<https://youtu.be/vpHxmt&JZe0>)

She added, “Coke’s festive truck sings out Christmas to most viewers, but it is also intrinsically associated with the Coca-Cola brand. It is in the top 2

percent of all ads in the U.K. in terms of brand connection, so the success of the festive campaign will translate to long-term brand loyalty.”

Final Thoughts I asked Deason via email, “What happened to John Lewis? Why didn’t an ‘Unexpected Guest’ named Skye do better than Kevin the Carrot?”

She said, “It’s great to see John Lewis back with an ad that people have really enjoyed. Although not quite as emotionally evocative as some of its previous hits, it still lands in the top 16 percent of all U.K. ads and was the second most enjoyed Christmas campaign of 2021.”

“Music continues to be a key driver of emotional engagement for John Lewis, its track was the second most enjoyed this year. The ad is distinctive (top 16 percent) and is one of the top ones which people would share with others,” Deason added.

While the role of the John Lewis brand is weaker than in previous years, she said, it always benefits from the anticipation and conversation around the ad each Christmas. The absence of an obvious must-have mascot might also impact its ability to drive traffic to the brand.

This could explain why it may not grab potential shoppers in the way it has before. Even so, Deason pointed out that it is still keeping viewers entertained, as it has done consistently over the past decade.

If the John Lewis team wants some inspiration, then I would encourage them to get their SEO, content marketing, social media, and paid search teams together and watch “John Lewis Christmas Advert 2015—#ManOnTheMoon,” It has 30.4 million views and 163,000 engagements.

That demonstrates the potential power of nostalgia marketing during the Christmas season. Unfortunately, it is no longer available.

In fact, none of the John Lewis Christmas adverts listed in the chart at the beginning of this section are available, even though they would have all ranked in the top 20 videos created by a brand in the United Kingdom with Christmas in the title with the most engagements of all time. That’s a great pity.

Why should they still be available? Three explanations come to mind.

- First, when people continue to watch old Christmas adverts that evoke a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, it can continue to build brands for the future.
- Second, your social media and paid search teams can add up to five cards to each old Christmas advert to make them more interactive. These cards enable you to link your old Christmas adverts to your newest one. If you’re in the YouTube Partner Program, you can add a card that allows you to link to your external website to share the latest merchandising opportunities with your audience.