

ADVERTISING

Harvey Nichols promotes honesty in tongue-in-cheek Christmas effort

December 7, 2015

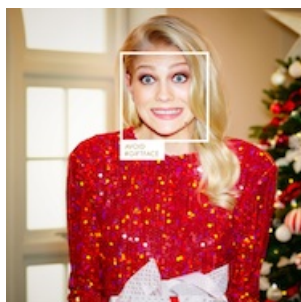


Image from Harvey Nichols' Avoid #GiftFace campaign

By SARAH JONES

British department store chain Harvey Nichols is using its retail expertise to protect consumers from a new holiday-induced malady.

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The retailer has coined the term #GiftFace to refer to the forced smile put on when a gift recipient has to feign enthusiasm for an unexciting present and has illustrated the condition with a series of comic social posts. As the holidays are approaching, retailers are looking to find creative, amusing ways to highlight their gift guides that go beyond a simple listing.

"#GiftFace is a funny, universal and relatable concept well-executed," said Marko Muellner, digital vice president and group director at [Edelman](#), Portland. "It also gets to the heart of one of the things we fear most over the holidays receiving gifts we hate. This fear speaks directly to one of Harvey Nichols biggest brand promise being an impeccably curated store full of gifts we love.

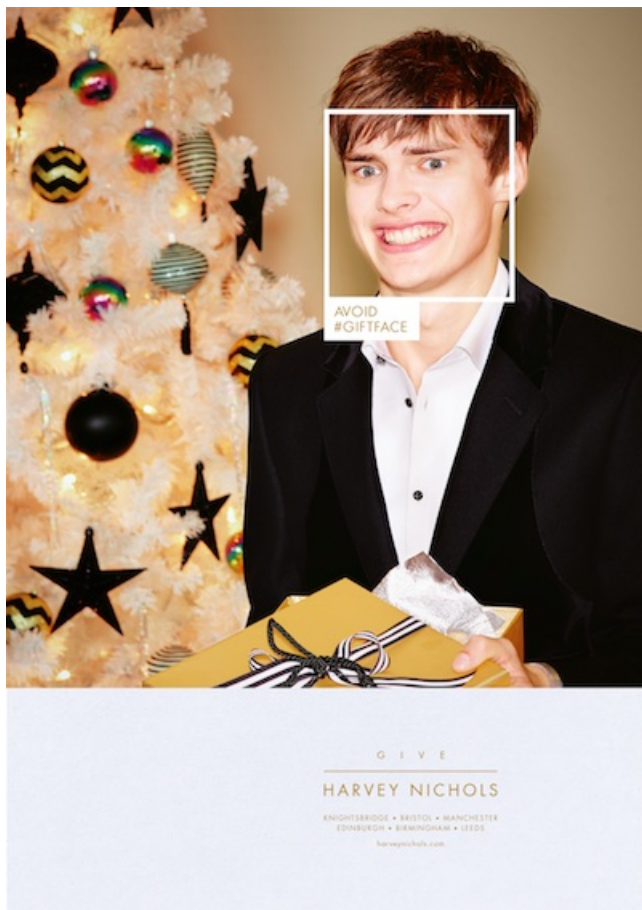
"This campaign reminds us that marketing is simple pick a key consumer insight that you directly improve, apply creative flair and an amplification strategy and then scale what works," he said. "#GiftFace does this well at each level."

Mr. Muellner is not affiliated with Harvey Nichols, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Harvey Nichols was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Preventative measures

Harvey Nichols' "Avoid #GiftFace" campaign derives from the notion of British politeness, in which the country's citizens will do anything to avoid hurting another person's feelings. This idea of them being "fakers" is not unfounded, as the retailer found 72 percent of British consumers have copped to pulling a #GiftFace when holding an unwanted present, and 63 percent have admitted to wearing a gift to appease the gift giver.



Campaign image from Harvey Nichols' Avoid #GiftFace effort

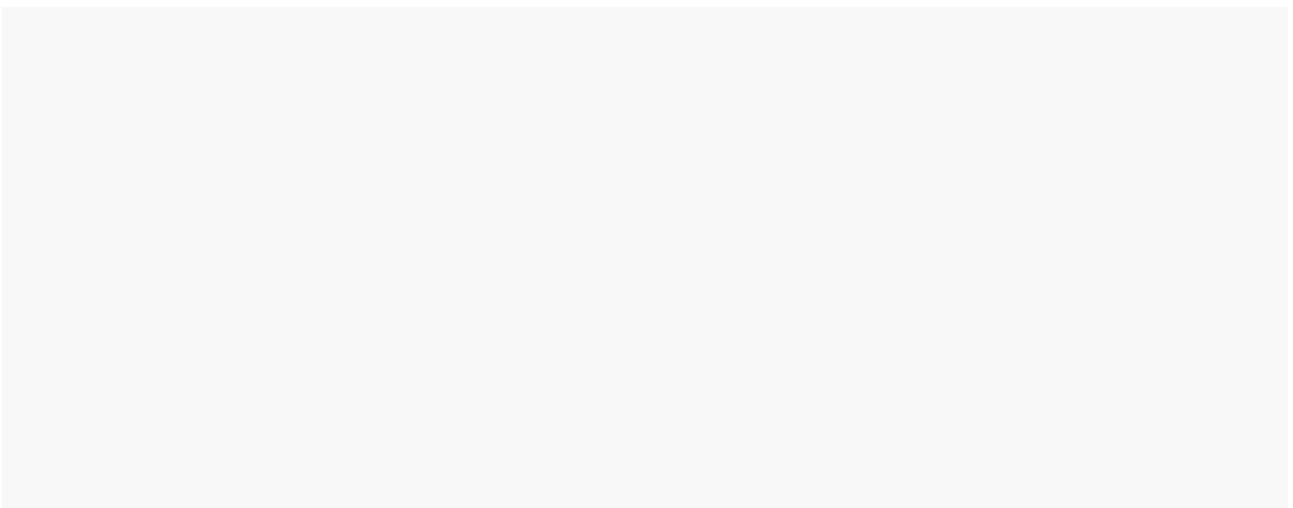
This effort also takes the unconventional stance that receiving is also an important part of the holiday season.

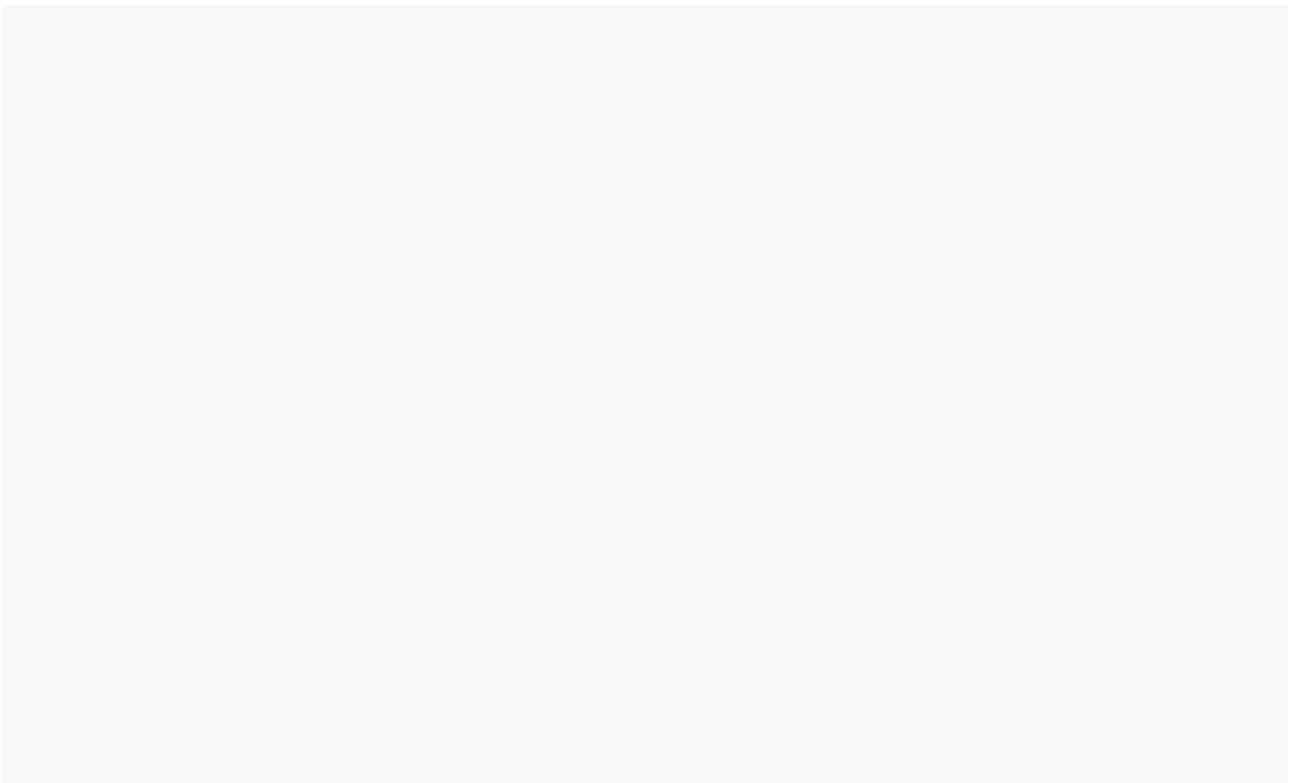
"This year we wanted to help people Avoid #GiftFace and ensure our customers give their special somebody a gift that truly hits the mark," said Shadi Halliwell, group creative and marketing director of Harvey Nichols, in a statement. "We worked closely with adam&eveDDB to create yet another compelling and comical campaign that we know the British public can relate to.

"We've all been there!" she said. "So this season shop with us for guaranteed satisfaction Avoid #GiftFace, Give Harvey Nichols."

Harvey Nichols has taken it upon itself to rescue consumers from #GiftFace through a campaign running in print, online and through in-store activations.

Online, in a series of GIFs and a video, actors are shown opening misguided gifts and contorting their visages into an overenthusiastic grin.





A video posted by Harvey Nichols (@harveynichols) on Dec 2, 2015 at 5:00am PST

A one-minute campaign video follows the tribulations of Lucy, a fashionable woman dressed in Marni, as she opens the Christmas gifts of her well-meaning relatives.

Her wariness shows as she accepts a package from her mother. Inside is an 80 percent cotton towel, which the mother explains will keep it from getting wrinkled as Lucy smiles maniacally, causing her mother to say, "I knew she would like them."

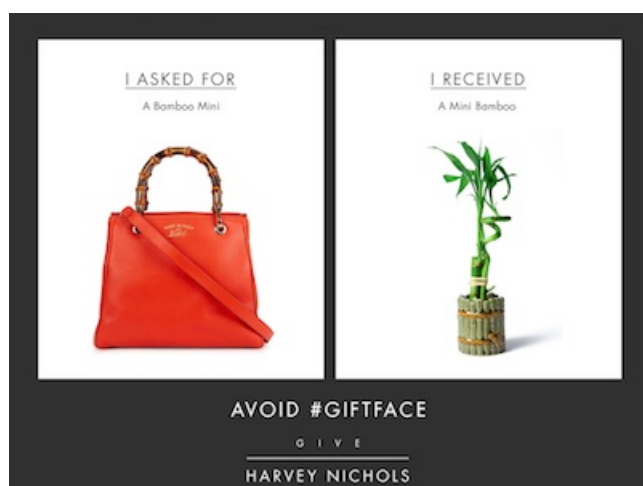
Lucy's misfortune continues with a dictionary from her boyfriend and an oversized, multicolored sweater from her grandmother. In the midst of the unwrapping, Lucy is shown massaging her cheeks, sore from all of the effort.

Harvey Nichols Christmas 2015 - Avoid #GiftFace

At the end of the film, the retailer tells the viewer to avoid #GiftFace by giving Harvey Nichols, as options such as Glenfiddich whiskey and a silver Stella McCartney handbag appear.

On social media, the campaign continues with GIFs of other troubled recipients.

Another series running on Instagram compares the wish list item with the actual gift. For instance, one explains that the writer asked for a Bamboo Mini Gucci handbag, but received a mini bamboo plant. Another comedic misinterpretation from a clueless gift giver is mistaking a desire for four candles for a need of fork handles.



Campaign image from Harvey Nichols

On its Web site, Harvey Nichols offers the alternatives to #GiftFace in the form of gift guides for everyone on the list. In-store, various products are labeled "guaranteed grin giver" or "certified dimple denter" to point shoppers in the right direction.



Image from Sibling Distillery

"[The topic is] universal," Mr. Muellner said. "We've all received a gift that's made us cringe, and we've all smiled and said thank you.

"But as we know, it's not enough to solely resonate in marketing today," he said. "How we capitalize on that opportunity, how we get consumers to engage further, and ideally share, is where a good idea becomes a good campaign."

Comedic commercialism

An element of comedy can help a brand get away with a very commercial message around the holidays, which might otherwise be frowned upon by some.

For example, British leather goods maker Mulberry inspired competitive gifting with its #WinChristmas holiday campaign last year.

The campaign centered on a social video, which showed a young woman unwrapping presents from her various family members, who were trying to out-do each other. This film helped position Mulberry as the ideal gift destination, which may have spurred holiday sales ([see story](#)).

Other brands have used humor to highlight the occasional misgivings of sales staff.

In 2014, Department store chain Bloomingdale's put the focus on its sales associates for the holidays with a series of videos featuring a perky, sometimes comically misguided mascot assisting consumers.

Bow, who is very knowledgeable of the store, tries very hard to help consumers find their ideal gift for loved one, even if her help is sometimes taken the wrong way. Department stores used their customer service to differentiate themselves that holiday season, and this quirky campaign likely helped Bloomingdale's stand out ([see story](#)).

These types of campaigns offer the opportunity to generate a social conversation, if consumers are properly provoked.

"The final step is crucial, execution," Mr. Muellner said. "How are audiences responding to the campaign? It seems to be focused solely on Facebook and Instagram and www.HarveyNichols.com/giftface.

"The core asset is great and it's a broadcast :30 which can be easily distributed," he said. "The Instagram and Facebook efforts seems to be primarily focused on posting around the theme and socializing the hashtag, which is great, but sharing a more consistent series of content or providing fun social tools would really help drive momentum for the campaign.

"A series of #GiftFace-inducing gifts like another sweater from Grandma or the ability for people to easily add the 'Avoid #GiftFace' box to their own photos would have been great additions."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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