

AUTOMOTIVE

## Lexus shows Santa has no age limit in holiday spots

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*Image courtesy of Lexus; Santa features prominently in Lexus' ads*

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By SARAH JONES

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus is inspiring consumers to dream big this holiday with a campaign that brings out their inner kids.

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The automaker's "December to Remember" effort for its end of year sales event centers on five television commercials featuring adults using children's Santa wishes as a vehicle to fulfill their Lexus fantasies. This playful take on self-gifting cars is designed to inspire childlike wonder in grownups while also celebrating families coming together around the holidays.

"We discovered that the best holidays tend to be when you are a kid," said Brian Bolain, general manager of Lexus product & consumer marketing. "We wanted to find a way to bring joy back to the holiday season for adults, too.

"This year's campaign aims to reinvigorate adults' love of the holidays by encouraging customers to 'wish big,'" he said. "Kids have a lifeline to Santa that adults can't touch, and this year's campaign has fun with the idea that families can work together so everyone can have a great holiday."

On the nice list

Lexus' ads will begin airing on television on Nov. 16, with the brand targeting cable, network and sports channels, among others.

One spot, "Forgery," shows two parents huddled over a piece of paper, strategizing their penmanship to best recreate a child's handwriting in red crayon. They are discovered by their young son, who reads the note about their desired RX F Sport aloud, adding his own request: a puppy.



*Still from Lexus' "Forgery"*

The family is then shown to have gotten what they all wanted, as a Lexus and a puppy both appear in their snowy driveway wearing red bows. A voiceover says, "If you're going to wish, wish big," the tagline used in each ad.

Continuing the idea of the "Santa Letter," another commercial finds a younger girl composing her note to Saint Nick while her mother cooks beside her in the kitchen. As she gets to the part about the Lexus, her mother hijacks the writing process, throwing some glitter on the paper as a finishing touch.

Others center on the familiar figure at the shopping center.

"Mall Santa" shows a boy on Santa's knee, rattling off model details, looking to his father for guidance and prompts. The pair exchanges a knowing glance and a thumbs up, a hint at their new vehicle unveiled on the holiday.



*Video still from Lexus' "Mall Santa"*

In "Auntie," a mother asks her husband where their daughter is. As he answers that she is with his sister, the mom shows confusion, since she "hates kids."

The daughter is seen with the aunt at the mall, going over her lines before meeting Santa and receiving a bribe for her help. Proving a bonding experience, the daughter notes her aunt's new car when she arrives at Christmas, and the pair low fives.

Taking Santa into the 21st century, "Santa Cam" features a video chat between a girl and the jolly elf. After she tells him how she wants a Lexus, Santa asks what features she wants.

Her father chimes in, speaking off camera or creating a high-pitched voice for a stuffed rabbit.

*Lexus December to Remember Commercial: "Santa Cam"*

The commercials showcase a range of the automaker's lineup, with each family depicted adding a different vehicle to their driveway.

Creating a multicultural appeal for these ads, Santa Cam will be translated into Spanish for the Hispanic market, while a second version of Forgery has been produced for an AsianAmerican audience.

The multicultural media placements across print, broadcast, radio, and digital will run for seven weeks in 16 markets.

Lexus tapped illustrator Andrew Banneker for its print ads, which show different Lexus models topped with red bows. These images are paired with the tagline "Wish, Granted."



*Lexus December to Remember print ad*

The automaker is also running digital display ads on cultural and automotive Web sites. These pull the same artwork as the print effort.

Additionally, Lexus will have billboard placements in New York's Times Square and Los Angeles' Verizon Center.

"The "December to Remember" Sales Event campaign celebrates an iconic time of year and appeals to a broad demographic," Mr. Bolain said. "Lexus always tries to be inclusive with our marketing efforts, and this year's campaign is directed toward a variety of key audiences supported by dedicated creative and media buys in an effort to make this the most comprehensive campaign possible."

Building on tradition

Lexus' holiday campaign continues its strategy of making Santa a main character.

In 2014, the brand revved up its annual "December to Remember" campaign with more digital components and an updated theme.

The December to Remember campaign has become a fixture of the holiday season, and the automaker has used annual twists to keep bow tie-clad Lexus models seeming fresh. The commercials at the center of this year's campaign have a wholesome, family feel and play with the possibility of Santa's tricks ([see story](#)).

Last year's "December to Remember" advertisements showed parents telling their children an outlandish tale of how a Lexus came to arrive in their driveway on Christmas morning, complete with a big red bow, courtesy of Santa. This narrative approach to automobile advertising for the holiday season may help create an emotional appeal for consumers, creating a sense of wonder even among adult viewers ([see story](#)).

"The "December to Remember" Sales Event is designed to speak to all of us," Mr. Bolain said. "We hope these ads amplify Lexus' role as part of the holiday season and create awareness of the sales event.

"Regardless of if you are in the market for a new luxury vehicle or not, the spots are designed to help capture the holiday magic and wonder of getting the gift you always wanted."

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