

# HOW INFLATION (ALMOST) STOLE THE HOLIDAYS

Themes of Holiday ads from this year



# NOT A HOLLY, JOLLY HOLIDAY!

1010 WINS  
@1010WINS  
Official

Holiday shopping kicks off with inflation dampening spirits [bit.ly/3VnM7M7](https://bit.ly/3VnM7M7)



10:25 AM · Nov 24, 2022 · Twitter

**Inflation is ruining the holidays. Last year you couldn't find anything and this year you can't afford it.**

BY ANNE D'INNOENZIO, CORA LEWIS AND THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
November 23, 2022, 11:39 AM CST



**Russian-Ukraine War**  
Ukraine Scrambles to Restore Services After Disruptive Russian Strikes

**Consumers are cutting back on holiday gift buying amid higher inflation**

**With inflation and recession fears looming over the holidays, are retailers still able to market joy?**

Brands need to be strategic with their advertising this season as consumers tighten their wallets and seek out deals.

# THE GRINCHY YEAR

2022 was truly the year of the Grinch—with post-pandemic fears, Russia-Ukraine War, rising prices and now the fear of mass layoffs stealing the joy of the holidays.

For many, this year was brutal and has continued to be as it ends with uncertainty. The holidays are going to be tough as many struggle to put food on the table. As people look to make ends meet, the expectations around the holidays adds extra stress.

Inflation continues to wreak havoc this holiday season as people try hard to find joy in testing times. In the past couple of years, people couldn't get what they wanted—it seems like this year they can't afford it.

**This year's holiday ads showcase the year that has gone by. As inflation plays the Grinch this season, we saw brands finding ways to defeat the Grinch. We saw themes of magic and joy, the greater good, and brands playing their part to create relevance, as people start spending less this holiday.**



# WE NOTICED 4 MACRO TRENDS



## I could use a little social interaction

We also saw some brands keeping it real. Brands in this category acknowledged themes of loss, that the world was still healing, but ended on a note of optimism and hope for a better future.

01



## What's Santa have that I don't

This macro trend leaned into the reality of inflation and acknowledged that this holiday could be tough. Brands under this theme focused on giving the best for less while also ensuring that they give enough reasons for consumers to choose them.

02



## Maybe holidays don't come from a store

These ads tapped into the true essence of the holidays. In a year where families are going to have to cut back on lavish holiday parties, these ads tap into the moments of togetherness, community and magic that make the holidays.

03



## Welcome Holidays, bring your cheer!

Ads that fell under this macro trend leaned into the theme of nostalgia. We saw brands embrace the past to craft a holiday narrative. Using holiday classics, these brands continued on the holiday spirit of previous years to help us have a bright time!

04



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5

# I COULD USE A LITTLE SOCIAL INTERACTION

Brands showcase the holidays through addressing the realities of life

# KEEPING IT REAL



A counter-trend to the ads that felt sentimental and sweet, these spots showcased reality and showed us a different perspective. These adverts appealed to the realist who knows that everything wasn't going to be normal after years gone by.

These spots addressed themes of distress and the loss of a loved one. They gave us their point of view and the strength and love of family as we celebrate the holidays together, after a few difficult years.



Penny gives us a pensive view into the divisions in society. The advert feels like a rundown of all 2022 woes like the cost-of-living crisis, generational divides, climate change, racism, the war in Ukraine, and post-pandemic fears. It ends with plea to end the rifts in our society.



PETA debuted a holiday ad this year featuring Toby the Turkey. The film shows a turkey finding a home and getting the love it deserves, only to think they might land as meat on the table. It ends with the premise 'Peace begins at home' and urges people to have a vegan holiday.



Suchard, ASUS, Coca-Cola and Kroger tackle the theme of the loss of a loved one and celebrating holidays without them. Suchard presents a human story of a family trying to recreate Christmas like their mom, with food being a bridge that brings everything together.



# WHAT'S SANTA HAVE THAT I DON'T?

02



7

Brands give reasons why consumers should buy them instead of anyone else

# TALK VALUE TO ME



We saw many brands address the rising cost of living crisis and its associated stress with the holiday season. We saw brands offering the best value, so that people can enjoy the season while being on a budget.

Brands showcased value through the promise of no compromise. We saw some also mention prices as part of the campaign, enticing consumers with affordable prices for the holidays.



Tesco acknowledges the shortage of joy and forms a Christmas Broadcast Party. The spot promises more Pigs in Blankets, affordable wines, a promise to cut prices, and goes as far as telling viewers that Tesco's finest pies are available for 1.12 Euro.



TK Maxx talks about nailing Christmas for less with affordable yet great gifts for everyone. The advert tracks a girl as she becomes a local town celebrity by getting the best gifts for everyone from TK Maxx, all on a budget.



Brands like Rakuten and Sainsbury's also used the platform of value. Sainsbury's gives us a taste of royalty as a treat is being planned with crumpets and gammon. The spot highlights its caramelized biscuit pudding through a young chef who reinvents it to the delight of the Countess.



# I HAVE WHAT'S ON YOUR LIST



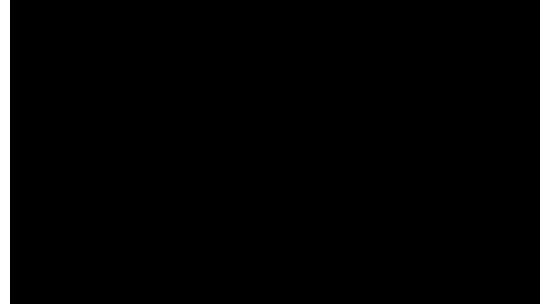
We saw many brands emphasizing their USP to become a part of the shopper wishlist. We saw brands lean into the theme of personalization to make holiday gifting easy.

Many brands ditched emotional long forms and used a slice of life narrative to talk about what made them the right choice for the holidays.

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Macy's showcases its Gift Finder in a series of spots.



Verizon promises a free 5G phone and other goodies for a switch this season.



Etsy showcases its unique products as it segues into different shopper archetypes—like the traveler or the first-time mom.



Brands like Boots, Very, Best Buy, Walmart, USPS, and UPS used the theme of having what you need to make holidays your way. Very showcases gifts for all Christmases while making a case for value with pay now or later.

# MAYBE HOLIDAYS DON'T COME FROM A STORE

03



Brands move away from materialism and embrace the true meaning of the holidays

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10



# JOY TO THE WORLD



In a year with greater economic uncertainty than ever before, we saw more brands committing to creating a larger impact, associating themselves with a larger cause and taking the onus to make a real change.

This year, we saw most brands partnering with a partner for good. Brands tried doing their part to make the holidays happier for everyone by tapping into story-doing

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John Lewis championed the cause of foster care and shed a light on their long-term commitment to support the future of youth in partnership with Action for Children and Who Cares? Scotland.



M&S 'Gifts that Give' is an endeavor to support community causes. In partnership with Neighborly, M&S promises to support local communities when one buys their holiday gifts from M&S.



O2 promises to connect everyone by giving the option of sending free data to someone who needs it. The commercial shows the power of connection as a sad snowman turns into a happy grandma with the power of an O2 connection.



# HOLIDAYS WILL ALWAYS BE, AS LONG AS WE HAVE 'WE'



Over the past few years, we have learned to value our relationships more. We saw brands embrace real connections that make the holidays special—highlighting that the greatest way to celebrate was with people we love.

We saw big tables, people coming together, sitting down as one and rejoicing around the holidays together.



McDonald's takes new a spin on the holidays. A young boy makes an alternative list which eschews materials and is all about spending the holidays with his family. Then, we see it coming true as the family dines together.



Lidl tracks the journey of a poker-faced Lidl bear who rises to fame. A life of showbiz awaits Lidl bear as he becomes famous and becomes wrapped up in tabloid scandals. A little girl who owns the bear appeals for him to come back and he decides to give up his celebrity life to come back home in time for the holidays.



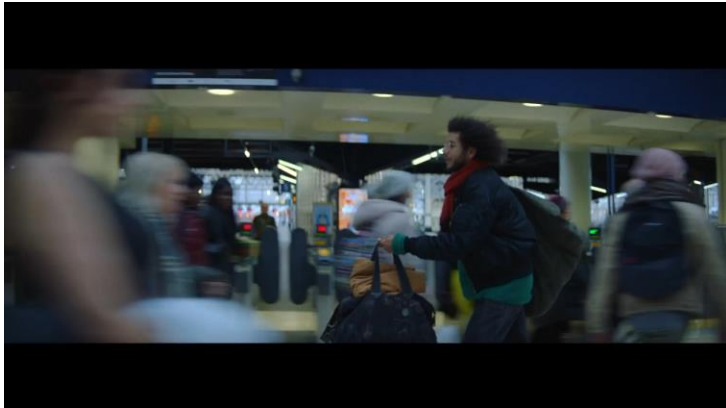
Brands like Pepsi, Waitrose, Sprite, and Walmart among others created emotional and poignant stories around the theme of togetherness. In their holiday advert, Pepsi shows a bunch of snowman friends coming together to have fun.

# BELIEVE... IN HOLIDAY MAGIC

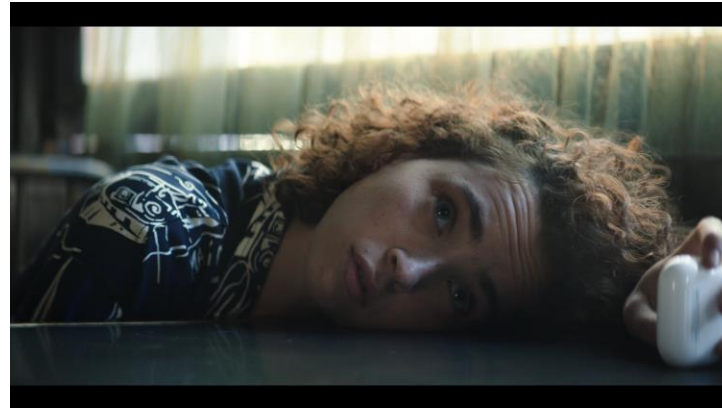


With a tough year behind us and perhaps one ahead, we are all looking for a miracle. We saw brands leverage the sentiment of the magic of the holidays to present us with whimsical tales and happy endings.

People are looking for fairy tale stories in a tough year. We saw magical stories of transformation and happy endings, reinforcing the belief in the magic of the holidays.



The National Lottery takes us through a larger-than-life Christmas Love Story when two people meet on a train and exchange numbers on the back of a lottery ticket. The advert taps into the feeling of love and sense of hope around the holidays.



Apple's 'Share the Joy' is about two friends lounging in a café. Suddenly a winter wonderland arrives, as if by magic, with a little help from the Audio Sharing feature on the Apple AirPods Pro.



Brands like Lego and Amazon tapped into the theme of holiday magic. Amazon tells the story of a father who recognizes his daughter's special attachment to a snow globe. With help of Amazon and his neighbors, he builds a life-sized version of his daughter's favorite snow globe—unleashing a magical experience.





# WELCOME HOLIDAYS, BRING YOUR CHEER!

04

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14

Brands build on past storylines and use elements of the past to tap into nostalgia



# HOLIDAY (AD) CLASSICS CONTINUED



Many brands brought back their own classic characters and send viewers down on a new journey with them. Building on story lines from previous years or continuing with new storylines, these distinctive brand characters added their own charm to the holidays.

We saw the use of animatics to witness the holiday chronicles of our beloved brand characters.



Aldi's Kevin the Carrot made a comeback, 'Home Alone' style. We see Kevin left behind as the carrot family makes its way to Paris. The film showcases his adventures as he tries to stop Santa from entering his house and, finally, him celebrating the Holidays together with his family after his adventures alone.



Disney builds on its 'From our Family to Yours' platform with Ella getting ready to welcome a new member in her family. The short film takes us through the narrative of sibling relationship, as a hesitant Ella finally embraces her little sibling and shares her Mickey toy with him, spreading the magic.



Chick-Fil-A continues the tales of EverGreen Hills with 'Snow Globe' as Sam becomes an apprentice in the Time Shop to help those who need help this story. With a 7-minute film, Chick-Fil-A continues its magical ride and promises us to show Sam's holiday adventure in 2023.

# ONCE UPON A TIME



Holidays are incomplete without a sense of nostalgia, and we saw a bunch of brands tapping into that familiar feeling. Brands tapped into character from famous holiday classics and books to create connect,

We also saw a lot of brands remixing classic holiday tracks and giving them a modern spin.

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ASDA taps into Will Ferrell as the Christmas icon Buddy the Elf. With footage imposed from the timeless movie, the advert tracks Buddy's antics as he gets hired for a seasonal job at an ASDA branch.



Barbour takes a leaf out of the children's classic 'A Bear Called Paddington'. The ad sees Paddington Bear noticing Mr. Curry being left out by local carol singers. To cheer him up, Paddington presents Mr. Curry with a unique Barbour jacket to cheer him up.



And Post-Ireland's postal service draws inspiration from the Wizard of Oz. The advert features the Tin Man, who goes in search of a heart. That is, until someone sends him one via the post.

# A FINAL THOUGHT: EXECUTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS



Blast this music.. It's joyful and triumphant

We saw many campaigns with little or no dialogue and a lot of dependence on the track to carry the storyline. Many classics made a comeback, like *Blink*, *It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas* and some recent releases like *PUFF*. Overall, the adverts tapped into music to create the magical world of the holidays.



No matter how different a Who may appear, they will be welcome with holiday cheer

It was heartening to see inclusion and diversity still being front and center. We saw mixed race families, African Americans, Indians, Hispanics across gender and ages. What did seem like a miss though was any LGBTQ representation—a crucial blindspot in celebrations of togetherness.



Brands getting the strength of ten grinch plus two

Many brands partnered with a foundation to do their part to make the holidays easier for everyone. As an example, Neighborly and the Make a Wish Foundation, focused on foster care and making sure every child gets a holiday they deserve.



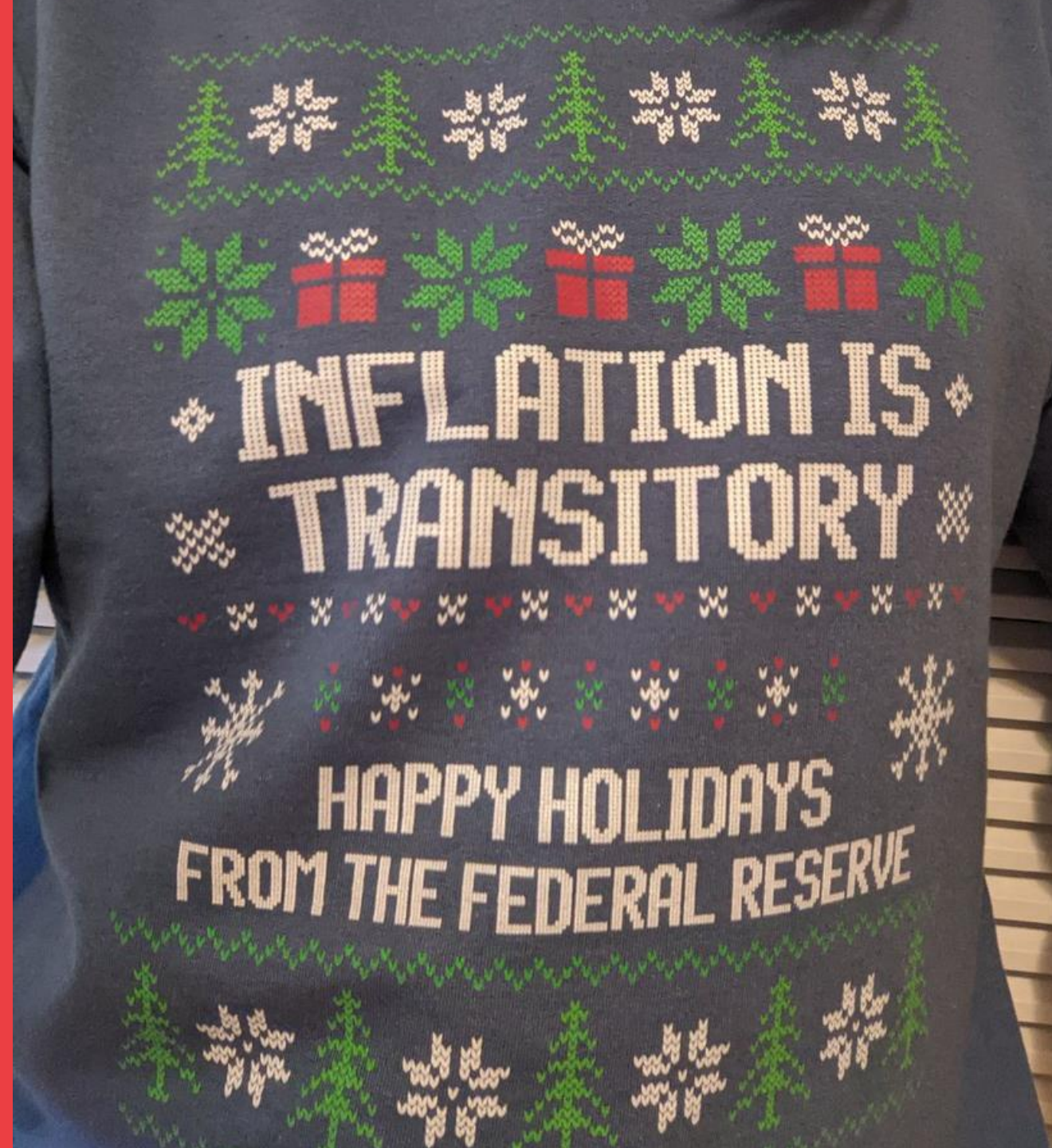
# THANK YOU!



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**Aakriti Goel, Strategy Director**

Fiona Sha & Stuti Mittal also contributed to this report



The image features a central red square containing the word "Ogilvy" in a white serif font. This central square is surrounded by a grid of other squares, each with a different pattern or color: solid black, solid white, solid light red, solid dark red, diagonal black and white stripes, diagonal red and white stripes, and diagonal grey and white stripes. The overall composition is a geometric, abstract design.

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